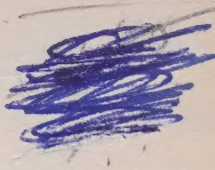
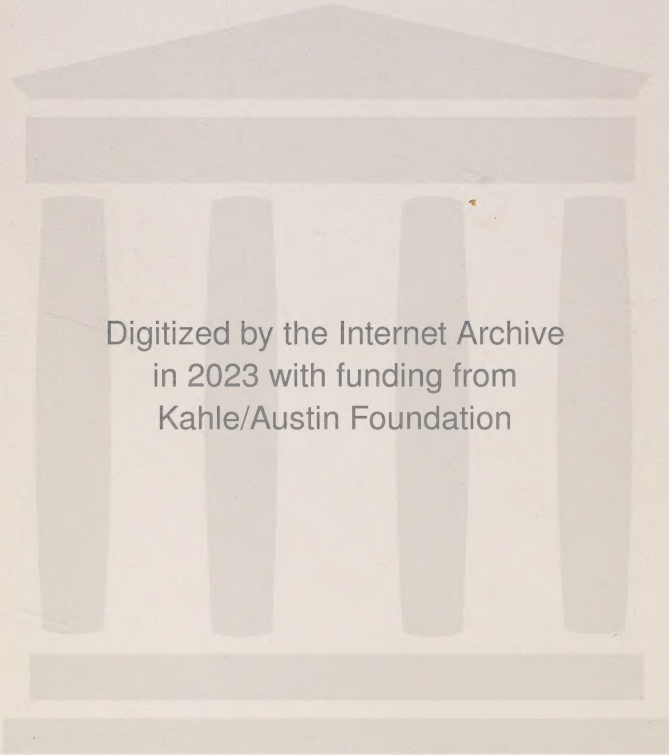
NUNC COGNOSCO EX PARTE

TRENT UNIVERSITY
LIBRARY

405



Hugh Maurice,


Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2023 with funding from
Kahle/Austin Foundation

https://archive.org/details/mycampaigninmeso0000sirc

MY CAMPAIGN IN
MESOPOTAMIA

Photo :
Bassano Ltd

Charles V. F. Townshend
1919

MY CAMPAIGN
IN
MESOPOTAMIA

By Major-General
Sir CHARLES V. F. TOWNSHEND,
K.C.B., D.S.O.

With Portrait Frontispiece
and Fifteen Maps and Plans

THORNTON BUTTERWORTH LIMITED
62 SAINT MARTIN'S LANE, LONDON, W.C.2

First published February, 1920

Bristol : Burleigh Ltd., at the Burleigh Press

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
	PREFACE	9
I.	INTRODUCTORY: THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF WAR	13
	PART I—KURNA	
II.	THE OCCUPATION OF BASRA AND SOUTHERN MESOPOTAMIA	33
III.	PREPARATIONS FOR THE ADVANCE AND BATTLE OF KURNA	45
IV.	THE BATTLE OF KURNA	60
V.	THE PURSUIT: OCCUPATION OF AMARAH	68
	APPENDIX, PART I	79
	PART II—KUT	
VI.	THE ADVANCE FROM AMARAH AGAINST KUT-AL-AMARA	84
VII.	THE BATTLE OF KUT-AL-AMARA	116
	APPENDIX, PART II	136
	PART III—CTESIPHON	
VIII.	PREPARATIONS FOR THE ADVANCE ON BAGHDAD	143
IX.	THE ADVANCE ON CTESIPHON	156
X.	THE BATTLE OF CTESIPHON	171
XI.	THE RETIREMENT TO KUT	185
	APPENDIX, PART III	201
	PART IV—THE SIEGE OF KUT	
XII.	THE DEFENCE OF KUT: FIRST PHASE	209
XIII.	FIRST ATTEMPTS AT RELIEF	235
XIV.	FURTHER ATTEMPTS AT RELIEF	252
XV.	THE DEFENCE OF KUT: SECOND PHASE	267
XVI.	THE DEFENCE OF KUT: THIRD PHASE	292
XVII.	THE ATTACK ON EL HANNAH	309
XVIII.	THE SURRENDER OF KUT	334
	APPENDIX, PART IV	342
	PART V—CONSTANTINOPLE	
XIX.	A PRISONER OF WAR	359
XX.	THE ARMISTICE WITH TURKEY	374
XXI.	CONCLUSION	386
	INDEX	394

MAPS AND PLANS

No.		*Facing page*
1.	MESOPOTAMIA : GENERAL MAP	400
2.	BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF THE TURKISH POSITIONS AT KURNA	45
3.	THE BATTLE OF KURNA	66
4.	THE BATTLE OF KUT-AL-AMARA	116
5.	BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF THE BATTLE OF KUT-AL-AMARA	134
6.	THE ADVANCE ON CTESIPHON	156
7.	THE BATTLE OF CTESIPHON	182
8.	THE ENTRENCHED CAMP OF KUT-AL-AMARA	292

IN THE TEXT.

	Page
Napoleon's Manœuvre on a Central Position, 1815	28
Napoleon's Manœuvre on a Central Position, 1813	29
The Defensive in the Secondary Theatre of Mesopotamia	36
Flanking Manœuvre at the Battle of Kut-al-Amara	141
Flanking Manœuvre at the Battle of Ctesiphon	148
The Retreat from Ctesiphon to Kut-al-Amara	186
General Dispositions at Kut-al-Amara	215
Facsimile Letter from Marshal Foch to General Townshend	388, 389

PREFACE

In order that military history should produce all the advantages that one has a right to expect from it, it should be accurate and true, not only in its recital of the facts it has to trace, but in its exposé of the causes which had more or less influence on the events with which it deals.

Such history is difficult to write when the events are recent and the susceptibilities of soldiers have to be encountered; but, when I reflect that official documents are sometimes exaggerated as regards success, while reverses are diminished and glossed over, I prefer to tell my own story, and to write it from my diaries, for there is no more certain or more legitimate way of impressing public opinion than a plain statement of facts which cannot be disputed and the bearing of which cannot be misunderstood.

The exploits of my soldiers were great in themselves and great in their consequences, for we conquered over three hundred miles of territory by our three victories, all of which were battles of manœuvre. The victories of Kut-al-Amara and Ctesiphon—second to none in the glorious records of the Indian Army—are signal examples of heroic conduct and devoted zeal on the part of the troops I commanded; I trust that the military student will be interested in my dispositions for those battles.

It will be seen that I always applied the principle of the mass against the enemy's weakest point by using the Turning Manœuvre with the Principal Mass of my force against the adversary's flank and rear; that is to say, against that flank of the enemy which was his weakest point by the simple fact that it lay nearest his natural line of retreat, which is always his line of communication. Meanwhile, I pinned the enemy *in front* by a holding attack with my Minimum Force. Thus I carried out the doctrine of Napoleon and Moltke.

While in Simla I remarked to Sir Beauchamp Duff that in order to take Baghdad I should require 30,000 to 40,000 men, in which case I would guarantee not only to take it but to hold it. I told him it was not for me to point out that it was a violation of the principle of Economy of Force to undertake the strategic offensive in a secondary theatre of the war with inadequate forces, that in a secondary theatre the defensive is indicated until such time as the decisive offensive is taken

in the principal theatre. He said : " I entirely agree with you, Townshend. Not one inch shall you go beyond Kut-al-Amara unless I make you up to 30,000 or 40,000 men. We have settled that you are now to advance from Amarah, fight Nureddin Pacha, and occupy Kut-al-Amara, which is of such strategic importance that we must have it." This I promised to do—and the result was my victory of Kut-al-Amara and my occupation of that place.

After this victory I indicated to Sir John Nixon, the Commander-in-Chief in Mesopotamia, that in order to take Baghdad I must have two divisions—say 30,000 men. Otherwise, there was a strong probability of disaster. But General Nixon decided that I should proceed without reinforcements. There was, accordingly, nothing for me to do but to obey, though such a task with a handful of troops was one at which Bonaparte or Hannibal might have despaired. And its magnitude will be the better appreciated when it is considered that General Maude to effect the same task, was given 113,000 to 120,000 troops, as against my 13,000, with a full proportion of guns, supplies, steamers, railways, etc.

Although the advance was against my judgment, and only boldness of manœuvre and shock action could possibly give success in such an enterprise, I felt that, if it could be done, possibly I could do it, for I had absolute confidence in my command.

That Ctesiphon was not a decisive victory was due to the fact that, at the moment when I had rolled up the enemy's left flank and the Turkish Army of about 18,000 men was in plain rout, Khalil Pacha, with a fresh army corps from the Caucasus, appeared on the scene, like Blücher at Waterloo. In spite of this, I determined to stand and fight till nightfall, for so great had been the carnage that I felt confident the Turks would retreat under cover of darkness. In this way Ctesiphon was very like Marengo. When morning came the Turks had retreated behind the Diala River some seven miles away, and I found myself with 4,500 killed and wounded, out of 8,500 bayonets, a loss of over 33 per cent. of my total force ! With the Turkish 6th Army united before me and entrenching behind the Diala River, there was now no question of an advance. Only one thing remained, and that was to retreat to Kut and dig in.

I remained in front of the Turkish 6th Army for four days, whilst I quietly evacuated my wounded down river and gave out that I meant to remain at Ctesiphon ; then I slipped away one night when the Turkish Army was extending its left arm to envelop me and cut my retreat to Kut. In a retreat of ninety miles, with the Turkish Army on my heels, I never left a gun or a wounded man behind, and I took 1,500 Turkish prisoners with me. On 1st December, I turned and fell upon

the Turkish advanced guard in front and flank, and literally wiped it out ; resuming the march to Kut without further molestation. The discipline of my troops and their suppleness in manœuvre was perfect. Soldiers will understand what this means after such a battle as Ctesiphon—where we had the most desperate bayonet fighting, where the Turkish trenches were absolutely heaped with dead, where guns were taken and retaken at the point of the bayonet, and where we had casualties amounting to 33 per cent. of our effectives. The conduct of such a retreat is, I venture to think, the hardest test which can be put to a general or to the rank and file under his command.

The resolution I took—to stand at Kut—saved us from being simply kicked out of Mesopotamia. All Mesopotamia would have risen behind us had I continued my retreat past this point, which is at the bifurcation of the Tigris and Hai Rivers, whence Feld-Marschall Von der Goltz, then commanding the 6th Turkish Army, could have directed a strategic turning movement *viâ* the Hai to Nasiriyeh, which was only some three or four days' march from Basra. To stand at Kut was the only way to enable Government to bring reinforcements from overseas and to repair the disaster.

But I bargained to be relieved in two months ; or else, as I wired to Sir John Nixon, it would be impossible to relieve us. For that reason and for other very grave ones, I called for relief early. I had urgent cause for doing so. The assault by the Turks on Christmas night, 1916, all but succeeded. Only the valour of the Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry and the 103rd Mahratta Light Infantry saved me that night. By daylight their assaulting columns were expelled with the bayonet and the grenade, with tremendous losses. Owing to the great floods and the swollen Tigris, it was impossible for me to cut my way out, and Kut, like Genoa, fell from starvation, after hardships mental and physical difficult to describe, and after a strenuous defence of just under five months—the longest, I believe, in British military history since the wars of Dutch William and Marlborough. Not till my men were dying on an average of over twenty a day from starvation, and not till I was ordered by wireless by the Commander-in-Chief in Mesopotamia to make what terms I could, as he was unable to relieve me in the time, did I surrender.

In the same way as Massèna's stand at Genoa, in 1800, made it possible for Bonaparte to fight and win the critical battle of Marengo, or as Osman Pacha's stand at Plevna gave time for the Turks to bring reinforcements from Asia Minor, so my five months' stand at Kut enabled Government to unite in Mesopotamia reinforcements from overseas, and eventually, with an overwhelming force of some 120,000 men, to advance on and occupy Baghdad.

Before being taken into captivity I obtained a written promise from the Turkish Commander-in-Chief that my men should be treated honourably and with care, and I used the considerable interest I possessed at Constantinople to better their condition. The harsh and cruel treatment they suffered during their march into captivity was due solely to the instigation of the German staff officers, who surrounded Enver and, in fact, all the Turkish high command, whose idea for political reasons, as well as those of hatred, was to humiliate our men in the eyes of the inhabitants of Asia Minor. In October, 1918, when sent for by the Turkish Cabinet to help them in the matter of making terms with the British, I demanded the instant liberty of my command before I consented to act. This was at once granted.

As a prisoner of war I had the satisfaction of bringing about what I had failed to do in the field—I induced the Turks to surrender, thereby shortening the war in Europe by several months, and, as a natural consequence, thousands of lives were saved and millions of money.

It was settled in half an hour's conversation with Marshal Izzet Pacha in his room at the Sublime Porte on the afternoon of 17th October, 1918, and I left the same evening for the British Fleet with a promise that the Turks would open the Dardanelles. The conference was arranged directly I reached Mudros.

Austria surrendered directly she heard the news, and Germany in turn followed suit.

On the grounds that no one, either soldier or civilian, can judge of military operations unless he has a sound knowledge of the six great Fundamental Principles of War as established by Napoleon, I devote Chapter I to these principles, which were followed by his pupils Clausewitz and the great Moltke, and to-day by the German Great General Staff, and by Marshal Foch and the French Higher Command. Those who are not interested in military tactics will begin the book at Chapter II, but I hope that many military students and many civilians, especially diplomats and Members of Parliament, will read it, for these principles form the so-called German Doctrine, which was applied both to the Army and the diplomacy of that highly efficient people.

CHARLES V. F. TOWNSHEND,
Major-General.

Vere Lodge, Raynham,
6th August, 1919.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY : THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF WAR.

THE Fundamental Principles of Strategy as established by Napoleon, the founder of modern strategy, apply equally to Strategy and Higher Tactics. These principles give a solution to any strategical or tactical problem which may be set, and they apply equally to war on sea and land, or in air.

Let us briefly enumerate these principles :—

A. The principal objective in strategy
B. Economy of Force.
C. The Mass.
D. The Strategic Offensive.
E. Rapidity or Economy of direction.
F. Security.

A THE PRINCIPAL OBJECTIVE.

"The first objective should be to conquer the enemy's army." (Hohenlohe.)

"To seek from the commencement, with all his forces, the bulk of the forces of the adversary." (Moltke.)

This is in fact the principle which stands out throughout the Napoleonic Wars.

A general direction must be given to the group of armies, and this general direction will evidently be imposed by military, political, perhaps even economic, considerations ; in this way we come to a geographical objective.

In 1870, Moltke gave the following indications :

"General direction, Paris ; objective, the enemy—wherever he may be."

Moltke copied Clausewitz's plan of operations for the invasion of France, drawn up in 1814 :—"In a war with France the problem consists in beating the French Army first of all, and, throwing the *débris* behind the Loire, to take Paris."* Von Schlichting wrote a few years ago :—"This plan of Clausewitz succeeded in 1870 ; Paris is, in fact, the head and heart of France."

It would not be sufficient merely to indicate the objective—the enemy. It is more than ever indispensable, with the enormous effectives of to-day, that everyone should have

* The project of operations was the same in 1914.

clearly fixed in his mind the object the strategist is pursuing, so that even in battle the initiative of all develops conformably with the intentions of the chief, who conceived the manœuvre. Moreover, as Jomini justly remarks in his "Strategy and Tactics," combinations reduce themselves to three: the principal effort can be made against either the centre, the right, or the left of the enemy. But it is necessary that everyone, from the private soldier up to the commander of an army, should be clearly fixed in his mind.

The strategist should not only see the battle, he should look beyond that. If one is victorious, evidently one will pursue the enemy, who will probably retire in the direction which he desires to cover, and which will probably be that which the victorious strategist would have chosen.

It is then postulated that the pursuers should know this direction, so as not to launch themselves in false manœuvres.

It might be objected, supporting the objection on the well-known aphorism of Napoleon, "one engages everywhere and then one sees," that it is on the field of battle that the Commander-in-Chief must choose the zone where he will deliver the "*coup de marteau*," and that to determine it, before taking contact, would take the character of a preconceived idea. This aphorism could be well justified on the battle-fields of the commencement of the 19th Century; at this epoch, the Commander-in-Chief could see, or see with his telescope, the terrain where he was fighting, and owing to the smallness of the field of battle could bring fresh troops to bear on a given point, where they could arrive in sufficient time to strike a decisive blow.

With the extended fronts of battle-fields of to-day this is no longer possible. The strategist can be kept *au courant* with the different incidents developing on the field of battle by means of the telegraph and the telephone, etc., but, if he has to shift the army charged with the principal effort, there are great chances that it will arrive too late and strike into space.

The decisive victory having been gained, it should be put to profit by an unrelaxing pursuit; followed by a march on the enemy's capital to take possession of it.

B. The Principle of Economy of Force

May be described as the concentrating of every man to fight, dispensing with no one and avoiding dissemination and useless detachments. Simultaneous effort accompanies Economy of Force. The French define this principle as concentrating your maximum mass against the principle objective, devoting the minimum to secondary operations. Napoleon violated this principle, through which he gained his great victories, in 1813—with the result of Leipzig—and again in 1815 at Waterloo, when he detached Grouchy with 40,000 men out of

a total of 100,000, and was crushed for ever. To violate this principle means disaster. History proves that whenever the army or armies of a power violate the principle of Economy of Force they are beaten. Notable examples in the wars of the 19th and 20th Centuries have been: Austrians in 1796, Austrians in 1805 (Mack at Ulm), and in 1866 (when they detached 80,000 men into Italy), Prussians in 1806, Napoleon in 1813 and 1815 and by keeping armies in Spain from 1811-1812, the French in 1870, the Russians in 1904 in Manchuria, and the Japanese by detaching Nogi and the 3rd Army of 150,000 men to besiege Port Arthur. Luckily for them Stoessel did not do his duty, so Nogi was able to rejoin the bulk of the Japanese forces just before Mukden. The Balkan Allies, instead of uniting their mass against the principal objective—the bulk of the Turkish forces in the field—which they could have easily crushed and then occupied Constantinople, each pursued their own selfish objectives, with the usual results.

C. Principle of the Mass.

If one studies the campaigns of Napoleon and Frederick, their secret of war is at once apparent. On every occasion they throw their principal Mass on the enemy's weakest point, which in Strategy is, generally speaking, his line of communications, and in Higher Tactics is that flank which lies nearest his natural line of retreat, i.e., his line of communications.

This principle and that of Economy of Force won all Napoleon's great battles and campaigns. Jomini tells us that the fundamental principle of all combinations consists in operating with the greatest mass of your forces, and with simultaneous effort on the decisive point, which should be the enemy's weakest point, either one of his flanks or the centre. Napoleon told Massèna, when he ordered the latter to proceed to Portugal in 1810, to "attack the enemy's weakest point with the greatest possible numbers." In other words, Seek the weak point of your enemy and act on that point with your Mass. An example is Ulm, where the Austrians had detached Mack and thus allowed Napoleon to envelop both flanks.

Ratisbon and Austerlitz are the only two examples of Napoleon finding the enemy's centre to be his weakest point. Eylau, Friedland, Jena, Wagram, Bautzen and Ligny are notable examples of the enemy's weak point being the flank, and Gravelotte, Königgrätz, and Mukden are also examples of the flank being enveloped or turned. Napoleon gives twenty-seven examples of the flank being the enemy's weakest point as against two examples of the centre.

The principles of the Mass and of Economy of Force should go together, as they are in reality one principle.

D. The Principle of the Strategic Offensive.

"The strategic offensive alone conducts to victory." (Napoleon.)

"To make war is to attack." (Frederick.)

The case of a weak power like Switzerland or Denmark against Germany obviously would not count in this principle, which applies to powers with sensibly equal forces.

That the strategic offensive alone conducts to victory is proved by the wars of 1796, 1800, 1805, 1806, 1807, 1809, 1866, 1870, the war in Manchuria and the late European War. Victory will always fall to the general (strategist or tactician) who attacks with all his forces united; covered in all directions; acting without delay, and striking the enemy's weakest point with the greatest possible mass.

In the war of to-day, the strategic offensive is not only advantageous, it is indispensable. The strategist who, directly he has concentrated his masses (principle of Economy of Force), will then deliberately move forward in the general direction of the bulk of the hostile forces in the field, and will operate with the principal and secondary mass against that point (flank or centre) which true strategic principles demand, will have the greatest chance of success, provided he has sufficient knowledge of the whereabouts of the enemy. This information should be supplied to him by his Intelligence Department, espionage before and after declaration of war, his strategic cavalry, and by aerial reconnaissance.

The Russo-Japanese War is particularly instructive and interesting on this point. Kuropatkin thought that he could not advance and deliver battle until he was accurately informed as to the enemy's strength and positions. He did not get it; he waited inactive, and was beaten in consequence.

The war in Manchuria showed that the strategist cannot wait for information before taking the offensive. As soon as he has formed his plan and has concentrated everyone, he should have only one idea: to march straight on his objective (the bulk of the enemy's forces in the field) with all his forces united. If espionage, cavalry, aeroplanes, assist him with information on the road so much the better. He should not move forward until he has concentrated all his forces, or otherwise he will violate the principle of Economy of Force. It does not matter if the enemy advances a few hours or days before him; he is not going to allow the enemy to impose his will on him as regards the choice of a point of attack.*

E. The Principle of Rapidity or Economy of Direction.

The shortest and most judicious road to the desired goal—the bulk of the hostile forces in the field.

* This is the lesson of the late war also

"Movement is the law of strategy." (Marshal Foch.) Act quickly and without delay. 1796, 1800, 1805, 1806, are Napoleon's most brilliant examples of this principle, and those which had the greatest effect on the results of the battles. From 1807 onwards he loses his great rapidity, and in consequence his battles become only half successful. He showed us the true Bonaparte in this respect in 1814, but then it was too late; his enemies had become too numerous.

The move of his army to Belgium in 1815 is a great example of this principle. Both the Japanese and Russians showed a singular want of appreciation of this Napoleonic principle.

F. The Principle of Security.

Keeping one's liberty of action and manœuvre by means of strategic cavalry supported by mixed detachments—armies of the flank or flank guards, etc.—is a great means by which to impose your will on the enemy and not submit to his.

Examples are furnished by Napoleon, the founder of modern strategy, in almost all the campaigns he directed. In 1796, the war in Italy, the first conditions to make his manœuvres based on his interior lines succeed were to assure complete liberty of action to his little army. Then we see him equally faithful to the principle of Economy of Force, uniting all his disposable divisions and moving in succession against the armies of the enemy, who had violated that principle by dissemination.

Each time he marched against one of these disseminated fractions of the enemy, he took care to cover himself in all dangerous directions with the minimum force he could spare. In this way he was able to strike a blow without fear of interruption. He added the principle of rapidity. One can say that from a strategic point of view the campaign of 1796 will remain a model type *par excellence*. Bonaparte overdid the principles of security in 1800, and was nearly defeated at Marengo in consequence.

In 1806 he launched a strategic advanced guard in the shape of a whole army corps in the front of his army so as to obtain liberty of action. All his campaigns show that strategic security was always one of his first preoccupations. In 1866 both Prussians and Austrians neglected the principle, with the result that at Königgrätz, Benedek fought a battle which responded in no way to his original intentions, and Moltke engaged a part only of his forces against the principal mass of the Austrians without being sure of the co-operation of the other part. In 1870 no strategic principles were carried out by the French Generals, nor did Moltke show any pronounced application of the principle of security. The Japanese General Staff on the other hand showed that they thoroughly understood it in the war in Manchuria.

The doctrine of the German Staff in Strategy is based on the Napoleonic fundamental principles :—

A. 1. The first object is the enemy's army ; and the aim to destroy it.
2. With this view to march against it with several groups of columns, preceded by a numerous cavalry, charged with the duty of discovering where the principal mass of the enemy is.
3. To adopt a front march proportioned to the distance to which the army is reconnoitred in front, in such a way as to enable the army to concentrate in one or two days to fight.
4. The principal mass of the enemy once being found, groups of collateral columns will be converged on it in such a manner as to attack it simultaneously in front and flank, and to cut its principal line of food and supplies.
5. Decisive victory having been gained, to put it to profit by an unrelaxing pursuit ; then to march on the enemy's capital to take possession of it.
6. To cover the two flanks of the line of communications with the mother country by mobile armies, and to reduce troublesome fortresses.

B From the tactical point of view :—
7. In tactical marches, in lines of divisional columns, to keep the artillery near the head of columns, and the munitions behind the combatant troops. To explore the front and flanks with cavalry. To utilise cyclists for the communications in rear.
8. Service of Security : Instead of contenting oneself with observation on the spot, to send out successively detachments and patrols to discover and seek the enemy, and to watch the flanks to a distance.
9. In an offensive combat, to proceed at first by a minute reconnaissance of the dispositions of the defender, and to ascertain where his two flanks rest. To place the mass in such a manner as to attack the front and flank of the enemy's position—always to hold in front and envelop a flank. To dissimulate the march of approach as long as possible by the aid of cover and depressions of the terrain. In acting with superior forces against the wing of the defender, to contain his front at the same time by a numerous artillery.
10. In defensive combat, to support the flanks by obstacles or localities ; if not, to dispose echelons in succession behind the flanks. To send the cavalry or mixed

detachments to seek out the attacker in order to ascertain from what direction he is approaching. To dispose the general reserve on the side of a wing, well masked, so that it can make a counter attack at the decisive moment. To bring up the ammunition behind the line of combat. To create field works on the front and the flanks, masking them with care. To open up roads and telegraph lines in rear of the front.

The above doctrine, laid down by Moltke, is entirely taken from the fundamental principles of Napoleon, indicated in his military correspondence during his various campaigns.

The above principles of Napoleon are of even more importance to-day, given the size of the national groups of armies put into the field in the great war just concluded. In this connection, Colonel Repington, in the "Times" of December 28th, 1909, wrote that "we must still remember that the Napoleonic manner of conducting war remains the fountain-head of military wisdom, and that latter inspirations must be in themselves inexplicable to us unless we drink at the same source whence most of these inspirations are derived."

"All the great captains of antiquity and those who have later marched in their footsteps have only done great deeds by conforming to the principles. My greatest successes have been attributed to luck, and my reverses to my faults, but if I wrote my campaigns one would be very astonished to see that in every case I exercised my faculties in order to conform to the principles of war." (Napoleon's conversation at St. Helena, 16th November, 1816.)

Napoleon also said that in war "one must conform as much as possible with the great principles. It is luck which does the rest."

The great Archduke Charles, the formidable opponent of Napoleon at the battles of Aspern and Wagram in 1809, wrote as follows:—"After having written the history of thirty campaigns and assisted personally in twelve of the most celebrated, I can affirm that I have not found a single example where the principles well applied have not gained the victory."

In Marshal Foch's book, "Les Principes de la Guerre," we find: "The art of war, like all other arts, has its theory, its principles; or it would not be an art." Quite lately Marshal Foch in an interview reported in the "Daily Mail" said:—

"The principles of war are always the same. It matters nothing whether your soldier is on his feet in the open, or shut up inside a tank. The principles on which he must fight are unalterable. The development of the art of war is like that of architecture. The materials you use for your buildings may change. They may be wood, stone, steel. But the static

principles on which your house must be built are permanent."

As regards the strategic lessons of this war, judged from the standpoint of the great principles, we find, regardless of the lessons of history, governments violating the great principle of Economy of Force with the usual result.

Napoleon, who, as we have said, won all his victories by the observance of the principle of Economy of Force, did in 1813 allow political reasons and vanity to interfere with his adhesion to it, inasmuch as he locked up 200,000 veteran troops in Spain, a secondary theatre, when he was struggling for existence with the armies of Prussia, Russia and Austria in his principal theatre, viz., Germany. What was the result? He was defeated at Leipzig and kicked across the Rhine. Had he had those 200,000 troops in Spain present at Leipzig, he must have won a victory, for he nearly won Leipzig, greatly outnumbered though he was, and with inferior troops.

This lesson was lost on the French Government in 1870, however. They gave us then an example of the violation of Economy of Force perhaps unequalled in history. The regular army was beaten in detail in Alsace and Lorraine; an army of reservists was then formed and wiped out at Sedan; an army of 700,000 Territorials, National Guard, Mobiles, etc., was then raised, and with it the struggle was maintained for six months. Marshal Foch, in his "Conduite de la Guerre," asks: What would these three armies *united* at the commencement of the war have done? The result, he says, would have been that at least France would have retained Alsace-Lorraine. All these forces should have been united at the same instant, and, if possible, at the same point, on the principle of Economy of Force. It was with this example in my mind that I gave my opinion when called on officially to do so in 1913, that our Territorial system, as a preparation for war—whereby the Territorial Force was not to be permanently embodied and framed for war, until it actually broke out—was a direct violation of the principle of Economy of Force, and therefore a system of which even Bonaparte would have despaired. That we won the war is no argument against this contention. We had the armies of France to hold the field till we were ready with our hastily improvised armies; and then America came in. Would the retreat to the Marne have been necessary had our Territorial Force been ready when war broke out? I am inclined to think that the war would have been finished in 1914 had our regular and Territorial forces taken the field *instantly* side by side with the French armies, regular and Territorial.

The principle of Economy of Force has been briefly described above as uniting every unit in your hand to fight, and avoiding all fatal disseminations and useless detachments—i.e., all

detachments not absolutely necessary, which cannot be united to the principal mass of your forces for the decisive battle, or which do not detain, detach, or hold an equal or larger detachment of the enemy. It is best interpreted, I think, as the judicious grouping of your forces for the purpose of carrying out the first principle; that is to say, strategically speaking, you allot your Principal Mass to your principal theatre of the war, in which you are to gain the decision, and a minimum force to your secondary or defensive theatre, or theatres.

Tactically speaking, the principle of Economy of Force is that the enemy must be engaged in sufficient strength by a minimum force to pin him to his ground in what is called your "secondary field," whilst you allot your principal mass, in the greatest possible strength, to your principal or offensive field, in order to overwhelm the enemy's weakest point with the greatest possible numbers.

A propos detachments, with regard to this principle:

If it be proved that a detachment is absolutely necessary, then, having cut it down to a bedrock minimum, sufficient to carry out its purpose, you should arrange that it can be drawn in and united with your principal mass, or main force, for the battle; or else it must be so arranged that this detachment holds in check a greater number of the enemy than itself, preventing it in this way from joining in the main battle.

The principles of Economy of Force and of the Mass are the most important of all the principles established by Napoleon; and to their application he owed his great victories over the armies of the other continental powers, whose generals were utterly ignorant of them. His campaign in Italy in 1796 is taken as a model illustration of this principle of the art of war. In this campaign the Austrian forces were disseminated in packets all over the map of northern Italy, and Bonaparte crushed these forces in succession. By means of rapid forward offensive marches he would take up a central position between two of these separated armies, and, containing one of them with a minimum force, would with his Principal Mass overwhelm the other separated fraction of the enemy.

Clausewitz wrote of the principle of Economy of Force that: "The first and most important of the rules which impose themselves on a general-in-chief is to keep his forces united. He must only detach from the general mass of his troops that which is strictly indispensable for the satisfaction of an urgent necessity"

Napoleon constantly refers to this principle throughout his military correspondence, in his rebukes and in his advice to his generals, and more especially to Prince Eugène or King Joseph, when commanding forces in a secondary theatre of the war. "Why have you not united your forces?" And again he writes in 1808:—"The cordon system is good against

smugglers and for postal arrangements, but it has never yet succeeded in war. . . . . Is your army commanded by postal inspectors ? "

Unmindful of her history, in 1866 Austria repeated the violation of the principle of Economy of Force. For, in spite of the protests of Marshal Benedek, the Commander-in-Chief in the field, 80,000 men were detached from his main army to watch the Italian frontier, although there was no danger of Italy coming into the war at that moment. The result was speedy ; it was Königgrätz (or Sadowa), and Austria in the dust in seven days. Had those 80,000 men been at the battle, the Austrians must have won, for Moltke at one time was so near defeat as actually to issue orders for the retreat ! And the history of modern Europe would have been different.

And, finally, as regards Economy of Force : there should, of course, be one plan or project of operations for both the principal theatre and the secondary theatre or theatres of a war.

The expeditions to Gallipoli, Mesopotamia, and Palestine will, doubtless, in history be described as violations of the principle of Economy of Force. What were Baghdad or Jerusalem to us ? They were secondary objectives—very secondary compared with the need of winning in the principal theatre of France. But, at the same time, the truth remains that, owing to the Gallipoli expedition, the Turkish losses were so great in that operation that it is no exaggeration to say that their forces were emasculated, and had no real strength left vigorously to counter-attack our advances in the secondary theatres of Mesopotamia or Palestine.

Whilst on the subject of Economy of Force, it is not out of place to note the excellent strategy of our Navy throughout this war. Never has there been a better example of how the principle of Economy of Force should be observed. This is apparent when one examines the judicious distribution of the naval forces prior to the war. In the principal theatre—the North Sea—was the principal mass of our fighting ships. In the secondary theatres—the Pacific, Indian and Atlantic Oceans, etc.—we had minimum forces cut down to bedrock requirements.

The principle of Rapidity, or Economy of direction, was illustrated to the highest degree by the German Great General Staff in 1914 in the commencement of the war ; but the German offensive reached its culminating point in 1914 at the Battle of the Marne, in which they were beaten. The German Great General Staff then wisely decided to dig in and hold on to what they had gained ; they assumed a defensive *rôle* in order to tire out the Allies and conclude an advantageous peace.

Thus the Napoleonic war of manœuvre or movement was

rendered practically impossible, after the Battle of the Marne, and a "war of positions," recalling the wars of the 18th Century, a war of entrenchments, more suited to a secondary theatre, became the order of the day. This lasted with few variations until the great German offensive in March, 1918, changed the war of positions back again into a war of movement and manœuvre. This was soon cut short by the armistice. On the other hand, the operations in the secondary theatres of the war, such as Palestine and Mesopotamia, were wars of manœuvre and movement.

The slow progress of attack in a war of positions, where the defender utilises a succession of defended lines or position, exhausts the attacker; in consequence you have indecisive battles. The defence in a war of positions permits of hastily improvised troops maintaining themselves in trenches and under cover, whereas in a war of manœuvre and movement in the open field they would be quickly defeated by better trained troops. Moreover, an offensive war of manœuvre and movement requires the generals engaged to be experienced and skilled in manœuvre, and the troops more highly trained, as regards marching power and endurance, suppleness in manœuvre and higher discipline.

Rapidity in war depends entirely upon the experience of the commander and his staff, and—be it repeated—an excellent quality of troops. For example, Wellington, at the commencement of his campaign in Portugal, had a staff who were novices, his artillery was ridiculously weak in proportion to the infantry and scantily horsed, transport did not exist, but had to be hired from the peasantry. It will be seen, as regards my operations in Mesopotamia, that I was always handicapped by want of transport, and so compelled to make long waits between each advance forward. Not to mention my utterly inadequate force as regards the numbers required for an offensive.

As regards the Principle of the offensive conducting alone to victory.

Napoleon said: "Only adopt the defensive when it is impossible for you to do otherwise. If you are reduced to this regrettable extremity, whether it be to gain time or to unite your forces and means, or to entice or draw the enemy away from his base of operations (or from impregnable positions), an ulterior offensive must be the object of your action."

A great preponderance of numbers is, of course, necessary for the strategic offensive. This, together with political aspirations and ambition, decided the German Great General Staff to assume the strategic offensive in the Western, or principal, theatre in the late war. In addition, they had the more highly trained and experienced generals and staff and the higher trained and disciplined troops—with great marching

powers—for the manœuvring offensive on a great scale. But the strategic offensive also demands a constant stream of reinforcements following up the first and second waves in the shape of men, munitions and supplies, and the railways, roads, and communications generally must never be empty. The German Great General Staff miscalculated in 1914 the numbers requisite to carry through the offensive at high water level till the end, just as in the bombardment of a fortress one must constantly increase the intensity of the bombardment ; if you stop from want of munitions, all your previous work is thrown away. Napoleon in 1812 and 1813 ; Gustavus Adolphus ; Charles XII of Sweden ; Frederick the Great, and Hannibal—all failed from miscalculation as to the numbers required to keep up the offensive at high-water level, and to allow for the great wastage of armies on the offensive, entailed by a constant effort which must be maintained.

Add to the above the constantly increasing distance from home and main sources of supply, while railways in a hostile country are not to be reckoned on. And the dissemination of necessary detachments to be made as the advance continues ; troops must be detached to guard the line of communications, for security, covering services for the flanks, etc.

Thus in the strategical offensive you reach a culminating point, at which the original superiority of the offensive is by a natural weakening process brought down so low as to make victory doubtful.

The German Great General Staff reached their culminating point at the Battle of the Marne in 1914, and similarly after Verdun in 1916. In both cases the Germans, having failed in their blow, dug in and hung on while at the same time they endeavoured to bring about peace by tiring out the enemy. Joffre and Haig were compelled by circumstances to adopt the defensive and offensive, or the premeditated adjournment of the decisive act, which in the opinion of Clausewitz is perhaps the stronger of the two forms of war. Moltke, too, was of this opinion after the war of 1870 :—" It is true that in 1870 we attacked and captured the strongest positions, but at the price of what sacrifices ? If, after repulsing many attacks of the enemy, we pass to the attack, this procedure appears to me the more preferable."

This is the principle also on which a secondary theatre should be held, until such time as the Principal Mass of your forces in the principal theatre is delivering the decisive attack. In this connection, Wellington's strategy in Spain, a secondary theatre of the war in Europe in 1813, is a good example ; he took the offensive when the Allies in the principal theatre in Germany were taking the offensive against Napoleon.

Napoleon, in his application of the two great principles of

Economy of Force and the Mass in strategy, and in higher tactics, makes no difference in the offensive or defensive. With him there is no question of offensive or defensive, the word he uses is initiative ; either one takes the initiative or one does not, and I have always thought that the word initiative should take the place of offensive or defensive.

A Commander-in-Chief may lose the initiative by a delay in strategic concentration, or the enemy may have concentrated or strategically grouped their armies with greater rapidity. In the case of the Allies in 1914, one power, England, was not ready, and thus the French Generalissimo was compelled to defend himself in whatever terrain came to hand.

However, in spite of the many advantages claimed by many writers for the strategic defensive, it is impossible to divorce from it a sense of weakness, which often limits all efforts to the passive defensive. No decisive result can be attained by the defensive pure and simple. The utmost which can be obtained by the strategical defensive is a peace which the enemy grants because he is worn out. Frederick the Great gained his peace in this way at the end of the Seven Years' War ; but he held on to Silesia. In the same way, in the late war, Hindenburg and Ludendorff intended to hold on to Belgium, copying Frederick the Great in Silesia. A great political and military disadvantage entailed by the strategic defensive is the loss of *moral* among the population at home in having to abandon territory at the commencement. Compare the population in the north of France in the late war.

No decisive victory can be gained by the strategic defensive, all that can be attained is to avoid defeats ; the highest results, the destruction of the enemy and the taking of his country can only be attained by the combination of the strategical and tactical offensives.

Every systematic defence must have its turning point, when you must assume the offensive if you intend to win the war. The Battle of the Marne should have been the turning point for the Anglo-French armies in 1914, and in time I suppose we shall be told why it was not. The Turks attempted to take the Battle of Ctesiphon as a turning point in their defence of Mesopotamia, but I held up their counter-offensive by my five months' defence of Kut, after which lapse of time all chances of driving us out of Mesopotamia were gone. A strategic flanking position is indicated as a good opportunity for the turning point in a strategic defence, e.g., Foch's dispositions before assuming the offensive after the offensive of the Germans was held up in March, 1918. In the beginning of 1918 the German Great General Staff took the Battle of Cambrai as their turning point to change to the offensive after a defensive of nearly two years.

THE ADAPTATION OF THE NAPOLEONIC PRINCIPLES BY MOLTKE, whose doctrine was closely followed by the German Great General Staff.

Moltke modelled his system in strategy and higher tactics on that of Napoleon.

When on the offensive two systems of Strategic Manœuvre are used :—

(*a*) The manœuvre against the enemy's flank and rear ;
(*b*) The manœuvre against the centre.

In like manner the German Great General Staff used two systems in higher tactics for an offensive battle :—

(*a*) The turning manœuvre with the Principal Mass against the enemy's flank and rear ;
(*b*) The attack against the centre.

In both cases (*a*) is the favourite manœuvre, as it was with Napoleon. We have twenty-seven examples in Napoleon's battles of (*a*) type, against only two of (*b*) type.

That is to say, the favourite system consists in the combination of a turning movement and attack on the flank and rear of the enemy by the secondary mass (or " the offensive wing of manœuvre," as Moltke called it), and an attack by the Principal Mass (or " Centre," as Moltke called it) against that wing which has been turned. Like Napoleon, Moltke selected as the weakest point of the enemy, on which to apply his Principal Mass, that flank and wing which lay nearest his natural line of communications.

To describe the system more intimately : Moltke, following Napoleon closely, delivered a turning attack with his secondary mass against that flank of the enemy which lay nearest his natural line of retreat. He supported this enveloping or turning attack by a principal attack with his Principal Mass against the same wing of the enemy which had been turned or enveloped.

That wing of the enemy which lies furthest from the enemy's natural line of retreat, and has not been enveloped or turned, he contained by a holding attack or Minimum Force, which Moltke called his " defensive wing," and gave, following Napoleon, a clearly defensive character to this zone of the battle-field. This minimum force, in order to hold the enemy and induce him to use up his reserves, etc., utilises obstacles of the terrain, such as water-courses, forests, etc., and field fortification, defence of localities, villages, etc.

The preparatory attack is carried out by this minimum force, supported by the bulk of the artillery and the engineers, and it is during this preparatory attack that the secondary mass, or turning or enveloping attack, is drawn round like a net on to the extreme flank—and the rear of that flank—of the enemy which lies nearest his natural line of retreat. The bulk of the cavalry co-operates with this turning attack, moving on

its exterior flank. The Principal Mass is launched against the wing of the enemy doomed to destruction, as soon as it is seen that the turning attack by the secondary mass is taking effect.

The attack of the Principal Mass is the signal for the " whole to advance," and the hammer blow of the Principal Mass and secondary mass on one wing of the enemy should automatically smash it up.

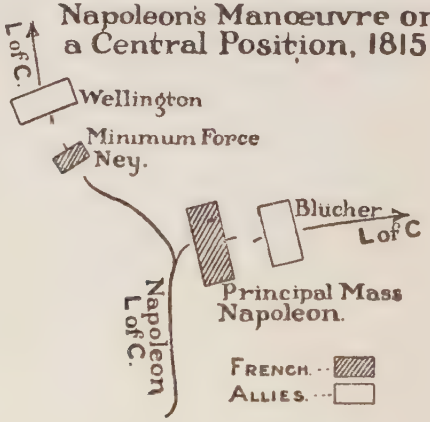
The minimum force turns its holding attack into a decisive one as soon as the principal or decisive attack is delivered by the Principal Mass, and the wing of the enemy it is engaged with will generally flee when it is understood that its broken wing is being crushed.

Napoleon realised, like his imitators Moltke and the German Great General Staff, that the great increase of fire effect in modern wars renders penetration of the centre more and more difficult, and gives always greater importance to the enveloping or turning form of attack. We should always resort to the turning or enveloping manœuvre, both in strategy and in tactics, when circumstances and room for manœuvre permit of such action. " Talent in a commander-in-chief consists in containing the front of an enemy with a part of his forces, whilst he uses his principal effort against the enemy's flank." This was the doctrine of Willisen, of Moltke, and of the German Great General Staff. The great strategic turning manœuvre of the German Great General Staff in 1914 is simply a copy of the manœuvres of Napoleon in 1805 and 1806—the Austerlitz and Jena campaigns—and on approximately the same extent of strategic front. This is at once apparent if the trouble be taken to compare the campaigns.

There was, of course, little space for manœuvre in the Western theatre in the late war, owing to the space taken up by the great groups of national armies, after the preliminary war of manœuvre in 1914. But there were ample spaces for manœuvre and examples of the war of manœuvre in such secondary theatres of the war as Russia, Rumania, Palestine, and Mesopotamia. Owing to the enormous numbers in the field in France, Hindenburg and Foch had to develop the strategic Turning or Enveloping Manœuvre from an initial strategical attack on a wing. Hindenburg and Ludendorff gave us an example of this in March, 1918, when they copied the manœuvre of Moltke in 1870.

In the beginning of that war the French right wing (MacMahon) stood isolated in Alsace; the other French wing (Bazaine) was in Lorraine. Moltke arranged first to destroy the right wing, MacMahon, by means of an envelopment by his Principal Mass, in the meantime containing Bazaine by means of his minimum force. After destroying MacMahon, Moltke would swing round his Principal Mass to envelop

Bazaine, cutting him off from his line of communications with Paris and driving him northward. If you represent MacMahon's army by the group of British armies, and Bazaine by the French group of armies, you would have the example of Hindenburg's strategical attack on a wing in March, 1918. Hindenburg threw the Principal Mass of his armies on to the British, whilst he contained the French with his secondary group (or minimum force). Had he been successful in destroying the British, he would have swung round his Principal Mass, turning the French armies, and falling on to their flank and rear. At the same time his minimum force, engaged in containing the French, would have assumed the offensive also. The manœuvre failed because of the tenacity of the British soldiers who, though driven back, still hung together and were not routed; and again because of the fatal dissemination of a group of German armies in Russia. If we examine the example of Napoleon's strategic penetration in 1815, when he attacked Blücher with his principal mass whilst he contained Wellington with his minimum force, we can see where the Germans got their idea of this manœuvre from.



This was what Napoleon called his Manœuvre on a Central Position or on Central Lines; what some other writers call the Manœuvre on Interior Lines. He got into a central position by means of a sudden, rapid and secret march; then, containing one of the hostile armies with a minimum force, he threw his Principal Mass on the other hostile army, in order to destroy it. Having accomplished this, he ran with his Principal Mass to unite it with his minimum force, which was engaged in containing and holding back the other hostile army, to deliver the hammer blow. His 1796 and 1814 campaigns, when he

was compelled by inferiority of numbers to fight on the defensive-offensive, are brilliant examples of this manœuvre and the application of the Principle of the Mass.

If he were tied, so to speak, to some place which he felt bound to guarantee against hostile enterprise, such as Dresden in 1813, Paris in 1814, or Mantua in 1796, he made that place his centre of operations for his manœuvre on a Central Position

Napoleon's Manœuvre on a Central Position, 1813

In all cases the object and the application of the Principle of the Mass is the same as when you are on the offensive. By uniting your Principal Mass with one of your minimum forces, engaged in containing the enemy, you endeavour to destroy one of the separated fractions of the enemy. During this operation, the other fraction of the hostile force must be contained by a minimum force of sufficient strength for that purpose, entrenched on the defensive. For example, in Napoleon's 1813 campaign, Blücher attacked Macdonald, whose minimum force was entrenched, as is required of a minimum force. Napoleon ran with his Principal Mass to unite himself with Macdonald and crush Blücher. In the meantime, Oudinot was being pressed, and called for help. After settling Blücher, Napoleon moved to the assistance of Oudinot with his Principal Mass.

The distances between the Principal Mass and the minimum forces are on principle not more than two or three short marches.

As regards the distribution or grouping of your forces for the Manœuvre on the Central Position : It is simply a question of economy of force ; you economise the power expended on your minimum force in order to increase that of your Principal Mass, which has to deal the hammer blow.

Hindenburg and Ludendorff manœuvred the German armies on a Central Position in 1917 and 1918, following the strategy of Napoleon in 1813. They failed, as I have shown above, for the same reason that Napoleon failed in his manœuvre on a Central Position in 1813, because the disparity of numbers between the opposing forces was too great. Similarly, the German Great General Staff violated the principle of Economy of Force by sending a group of armies into Russia, a secondary theatre, when it was not necessary, just as Napoleon retained 200,000 troops in Spain, a secondary theatre, in 1813.

I will conclude this chapter with an extract from a lecture of mine given in 1913 :—

" The art of war, like all other arts, has its theory and its principles, and is the special study of a life-time. ' Good theories founded on real principles, justified by facts, and strengthened by the lessons of history, are in our opinion the real school of high command' (Jomini).

" Never have the great fundamental principles of war established by Napoleon, the founder of modern strategy and the fountain of all military knowledge to-day, stood out so prominently or been of more value, given the vast size of armies in the 20th Century, when war is no longer made by armies but by groups of armies. Our generals and field officers of to-day should be profound students of strategy and military history, and they should have a deep knowledge of the principles of Napoleon. In the same way Moltke trained the German General Staff before 1866 and 1870. Taught by the disasters of 1870, where the French generals, innocent of all study, and ignorant of the great Napoleonic principles, put into practice against them by Moltke, suffered cruel punishment, the French General Staff insists on this study. Marshal Bazaine is an example of a man ignorant of the great principles of war. He fell immediately beneath the responsibility of the command of an army ; and in his downfall dragged the honour of France. One has simply to read his operation orders to detect his utter ignorance of the art of war.

" Happily for France, the military writers Generals Langlois and Bonnal, Maillard, Foch, etc., preached the necessity of the Napoleonic doctrine, showing that they should not copy their conquerors, but should seek the same fountain of knowledge—Napoleon—as their victors had done. Moltke boasted in 1870 that he was the only man in Europe at that epoch who understood Napoleon. In training officers for high command, we should keep before us the requirements of the modern general. He should be a man of energy, capacity, intelligence, a man of the world, calm and collected under all circumstances. In addition to the above qualities of character, not only the Commander-in-Chief of the group of armies, but his army

commanders, army corps and divisional commanders, will have great resolutions to take, in which a false decision may conduct many thousands of souls to a useless death. They must then have a profound knowledge of the art of war; they must be students working continuously at the higher questions of war, embraced by strategy and higher tactics, so as to keep abreast of modern requirements, and they should have a sound knowledge of military history.

"In the 19th Century, it was sufficient to choose a man as Commander-in-Chief with experience of war and bold in combat, and to give him, as in the case of Marshal Blücher in 1813, 1814, 1815, a staff officer of high capacity and of frank and loyal character of the type of Gneisenau and Muffling.

"But that which was true of the 19th Century is not of the 20th. In the 19th Century the science of war was much simpler than now. It was possible in the beginning, and even in the middle, of the last century for a Commander-in-Chief possessing character and coolness and assisted by a good chief of the staff to command an army with credit.

"But to-day he no longer commands an army only, he directs a group of armies on a strategic front of possibly one or two hundred miles in extent; and we cannot conceive an ignorant man in the hands of his staff being able to direct under such conditions for a single moment.

"An inspector of Prussian military schools, General Von Pencker, wrote a few years back: 'When a general has the knowledge that he is enlightened by means of the instruction he has acquired, he will be able to sum up the situation in extraordinary circumstances; his character grows stronger, he acquires facility in giving clear and rapid solutions and putting them into vigorous execution. On the other hand, every man who is conscious of his ignorance is always undecided and hesitating, perplexed and ready to be demoralised.'

"Knowledge then is a necessary condition. It gives convictions a doctrine, confidence, faculty of enlightened decision; it creates power of action, makes men of action, develops character. To make a good strategist, common sense, a just mind, and, above all, a developed and deep knowledge of tactics are required. Without this fundamental knowledge of tactics one would arrive at conceptions which would in practice lead to disaster. It is for this reason that practical soldiers should not undertake the question of strategy until they are in the second period of their career.

"'If a good theory, founded on true principles, justified by facts and justified by history, will not invariably make great men—for great men make themselves when favoured by circumstances—it makes at least chiefs who are sufficiently able to be perfectly in their place in the second rank under the orders of great generals' (Jomini).

"Moltke tells us how to teach judgment and decision at the *Ecole de guerre*. He points out that the object in imparting military knowledge is to enable the student to use the theory taught him by the professor. To accomplish this, it is not sufficient to listen always—he must carry out exercises in which the principles must be applied. General Pencker prescribes that the students should put their theoretical knowledge to practical application, that officers under instruction should be made to act by themselves. The school of Moltke gave practical proof of the value of the instruction they had received in the 1866 campaign, where the commanders of the advanced guards, who had been recently at the *Ecole de guerre*, handled them with striking ease and vigour of execution.

"The practical application of principles to cases drawn from history is the best training for experience in the art of commanding. It should be remembered that the brilliant army, army corps, and divisional commanders trained by Moltke for the 1866 and 1870 campaigns had none of them ever seen a shot fired in anger; the French generals they made such an example of had practically all of them several campaigns, civilised and uncivilised, to their credit, but they were ignorant of all study of the great principles of Napoleon. This has all changed to-day, when the French General Staff are fanatics on the question of the great Napoleonic Principles, as are also the Russians and the Japanese."

PART I—KURNA

CHAPTER II

THE OCCUPATION OF BASRA AND SOUTHERN MESOPOTAMIA

BEFORE starting the account of my own operations in Mesopotamia, I will throw a rapid glance over this secondary theatre of the war, in order to summarise events which happened there before my arrival on the scene.

Early in October, 1914, the 16th Infantry Brigade of the 6th (or Poona) Division was despatched secretly from Bombay, under the command of Brigadier-General Delamain, with orders to demonstrate at the head of the Persian Gulf, to occupy Abbadan Island with the object of protecting the oil works, and, if possible, to occupy the port of Basra. On 5th November war was declared against Turkey, and the remainder of the 6th Division at Poona, commanded by Lieutenant-General Sir Arthur Barrett, sailed from Bombay and united with the 16th Brigade, which had been landed on Bahrein Island, famous for its pearl fishery. This brought the strength of the Mesopotamia Expeditionary Force* up to that of one division—roughly 15,000 combatants.

General Barrett, with the 6th Divisional Headquarters, arrived in Mesopotamia about 14th November. Fao, at the mouth of the river and inside the bar, which consisted of a lighthouse and a small blockhouse, was taken, after a few shots, by a company of infantry landed in boats ; and the division united at the mouth of the Shatt-el-Arab, the name given to the great river founded by the combined streams of the Tigris and the Euphrates. Thence it could march direct on Basra—which, I believe, had been the original project of the operations, as drawn up at Army Headquarters in India. However, the entire absence of transport with Barrett's force put this plan out of the question.

This was quite in accordance with our national traditions in the direction of oversea expeditions. Up to this great war of 1914-18 (if we except the Crimea, from which no strategic lesson can be learnt, except how not to do anything) the Peninsular War was the only one in which any British army

* Also known officially as Indian Expeditionary Force 'D.'

over the strength of an army corps fought on the Continent, and with the Peninsular I include the 1815 campaign, begun in the same way. It will be remembered that Sir Arthur Wellesley landed at Mondego Bay in 1808 with a force similar to that under the command of General Barrett at Basra in 1914, without any transport whatever to enable him to march a yard away from the ships on the coast. Our military history largely consisted—from, and including, the Seven Years' War—of a long story of maritime expeditions, in which a small military force was taken in ships and landed on some island or some coast, without any transport to enable it to march three miles inland. The force landed would either take up an ignoble position on the water's edge until the approach of the enemy's army induced it to embark again, or it would attack a town and harbour or take a fort, or be repulsed.

In the late war our Principal Theatre was France, since there were the bulk of the hostile forces in the field, which had to be destroyed in order to win the war. It is, therefore, astonishing to read to-day that men in high position in Government—not only civilians, but soldiers also—unmindful of history and the sacred principle of Economy of Force, advocated the action of disseminated force in the shape of the landing of an army or two on the German shores of the Baltic! The German Great General Staff naturally, as in 1870, made ample provision for that by using an army of second-line troops as a *force de couverture*, grouped and acting on the same principle as that of the Manœuvre on a Central Position (see Introduction). Covering a great extent of front—say from Oldenburg to Lübeck or beyond—this army was able instantly to concentrate or to unite by road and rail on any section of the line in eighteeen hours.

An army landed from a fleet would naturally be wanting in transport and be greatly under-proportioned in artillery. But Wolfe, in the expedition against Quebec a hundred and fifty years ago, though he had no transport whatever to enable him to march, at least had lighters and flat-bottomed boats, in which to disembark his troops—and Barrett hadn't even that! It will be seen that the Mesopotamian expedition displays, especially in the way of transport available, all the worst faults of former expeditions and some peculiar to the campaign besides.

The Turkish force was discovered at Sahil, on the right bank of the Shatt-el-Arab, a few miles below Mohammerah. It consisted of the 38th Division—with its Headquarters at Basra—a unit much under strength and composed largely of locally enlisted Arabs, drilled by Turkish officers and instructors on the same principle as our Indian battalions, but certainly not so good as our Indian troops, and indeed more or less unreliable; and of the 23rd Turkish Regiment, which had been

sent to Mesopotamia some nine months previously, as a punishment for bad conduct. There were also some cavalry and field artillery. The total force, which was commanded by Colonel Subeh Bey, the Military Governor of the Basra province, comprised perhaps 5,000 men.

The 16th and 18th Infantry Brigades (the 17th not yet having arrived) were disembarked with difficulty down-stream of the Turkish position, which consisted of a line of entrenchments in palm groves on the bank of the river, and delivered a frontal attack, in the course of which the Turks fell back on Basra. The lack of any sort of landing material, such as steam launches, tugs, flat-bottomed boats, barges, collapsible boats, etc., which nowadays can be carried to any extent on ships, and permit a force to land at any selected point in one trip of the boats between transports and shore, rendered the disembarkation of Barrett's force a most difficult, tedious and dangerous operation. Several men were drowned in the process, and the gun ammunition was so short that, I was told, artillery could hardly be used in the action. Happily for the force the landing was unopposed.

Basra was entered unopposed on 22nd November, after a night march, the ships steaming up the river and picking up *en route* a number of river craft whose skippers had managed to evade the Turkish authorities and slip into the Karun River on the declaration of war. It was thus entirely due to luck and the action of these skippers that the force had any sort of river craft at all, for none had been provided by the Indian authorities. Without these craft, Barrett's force could not have moved a yard beyond Basra.

In accordance with superior instructions, Barrett occupied Kurna, situated at the bifurcation of the Tigris and the old Euphrates, some 35 miles north of Basra, and a most important point.

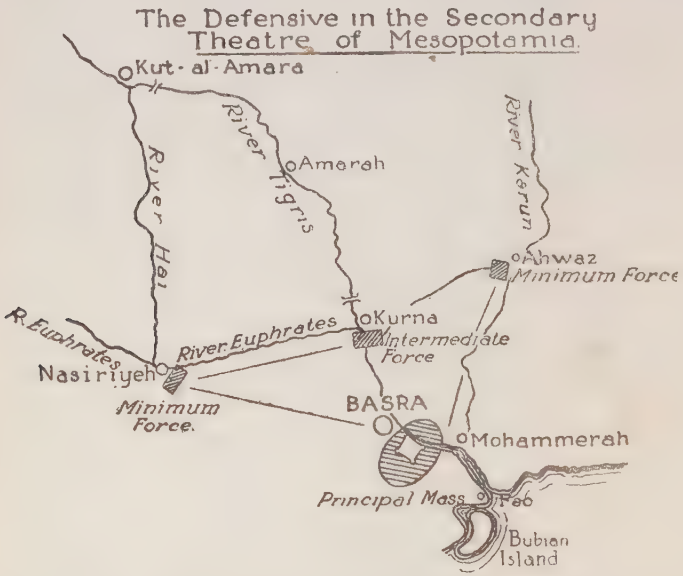
I have, in the Introduction, described the Manœuvre on a Central Position or the Manœuvre on Interior Lines. I was always of the opinion that as Mesopotamia was a secondary Theatre of the War we should have held Basra and its province on the defensive by a disposition similar to the Manœuvre on a Central Position.

In this idea I should have occupied the towns of Kurna on the Tigris, in the bifurcation of the Tigris and the Euphrates, Nasiriyeh, and Ahwaz on the Karun River, all of which were avenues of approach for the enemy, with minimum forces strongly entfenched and with ammunition and provisions for six months. The Principal Mass of my forces would have been installed in the vicinity of Basra, in an entrenched camp whose guns menaced that city and port. I have explained that the distance between the Principal, or Central, Mass and minimum forces should not exceed two or three *short* marches ; but rail-

way or steamer transport on a navigable river will allow you to extend the distance to two days' steaming or one and a half days' rail.

Kurna is some forty miles up river from Basra—call it one and a quarter days' steaming against the current.

Nasiriyeh is some eighty miles by river from Basra, *viâ* Kurna. The navigation is difficult owing to a shallow lake, and thus an intermediate force at Kurna might be desirable in order to make it possible to throw a reinforcement into Nasiriyeh speedily, before the more slowly moving Principal Mass could arrive from Basra. But as time went on a light railway should have been built to connect Basra direct with Nasiriyeh, and this was done after Kut had fallen.



As I have said above, I should have established a large Reduit, in the shape of an entrenched camp, close to Basra, whence my guns would menace and keep in order the city and port. In this Reduit would be concentrated provisions for a *year* for my whole force, all munitions of war and supplies, artillery and engineer parks, equipment, clothing, hospital equipment and stores, transport, etc., including ammunition for the whole force for the same period. Large grain magazines and mills, etc., would be organised in this Reduit, to which, in case of a check or reverse to our armies in Mesopotamia, we could have retired and defended ourselves for a year, supported by warships. Thus Basra would have been the centre of operations, the Central Place of all defensive arrangements. Whatever happened in the way of a reverse or check, or attack

by overwhelming numbers on any one of the three avenues of approach, I should have manœuvred successfully if, when attacked by superior forces, I succeeded in uniting my troops, ammunition, material, and provisions to last a year in the Reduit or Keep.

If you have no Reduit in a Secondary Theatre, in the event of check or disaster, all your material of war, magazines, ammunition, supplies, clothing, disseminated according to chance, will fall into the hands of the enemy directly he obtains the upper hand in the field. But if a Central Place or Reduit be installed, the enemy is not going to get the upper hand. So long as the Central Place exists, my troops may lose battles, but they can obtain breathing-time in the entrenchments or fortified position of the Central Place, and can again make a bid for victory, or can occupy an enemy three times as numerous as they by standing a siege, thus giving three or four clear months for a relieving army to arrive from overseas. So long as the Central Place were not taken, the fate of the province of Basra could not have been decided, and the great amount of material collected for the defence would not have been lost.

If such a fortified Central Place be installed, confidence is established in the minds of your troops. The soldier no longer feels he is *en l'air* in a hostile country, when at such a distance as was my command at Azizieh or Ctesiphon—some 350 or 390 miles from Basra, with no troops in support behind them. The defences of Basra, all would have known, would ensure security, rest, food, and the honour of the force—and, in short, in this way I should have secured Mesopotamia at a minimum cost to England, and in absolute security until such time as Government decided that I should take the offensive—preferably when the decisive offensive was assumed in the principal theatre of France—and gave me adequate forces to do so.

General Barrett occupied Kurna ; a place of commanding military value on account of its situation at the junction of the Tigris and the Euphrates. The 18th Infantry Brigade under General Fry moved against Kurna, and, after some fighting at Mazera on the left bank of the Tigris, opposite Kurna, some of the Turks retreated, whilst a part of the force under Subeh Bey surrendered to General Fry on the 9th December. This was a capture of 1,200 men and 9 guns.

General Fry with the 18th Brigade then entrenched on the right bank of the Tigris about a mile up stream of Kurna. Towards the end of December two battalions of Turks arrived at Sakricha, just north of Bahran, and entrenched, while the marsh Arabs began to harass our troops at Kurna by night-firing.

Up to this time the 6th Division had been short of one brigade. But now the 17th Infantry Brigade, completing the division, arrived from India and went into camp at Kurna.

Brigadier-General Dobbie, commanding the 17th Brigade,

carried out a reconnaissance in force towards Sakricha on January 1st, 1915, and fell back to Kurna, the enemy, of course, telegraphing "a repulse to the British," and being encouraged in consequence. Larger numbers of them soon began to arrive. Another reconnaissance in force was carried out on the 20th January from Mazera on the left bank to examine the enemy's position and report on his strength. The Turks had over 400 casualties, including their new Commander, Suleiman Askeri, who was wounded by our artillery fire, whilst the British loss was practically nil. As, however, our force retired again, the enemy published another victory. This is invariably the case with "a reconnaissance in force." The chief reason for its undesirability is that the action engaged in is without a definite plan, and, as you must retreat, the enemy will claim a victory.

The result of these reconnaissances was a greatly increased activity on the part of the Turks, and the creation by them of a formidable position north of Kurna at Bahran. The initiative had now passed into the hands of the Turks, and the attitude of the British became defensive. To this end an entrenched camp was made at Mazera on the left bank of the Tigris opposite Kurna, of sufficient front and depth for a division; but it was never occupied by more than a brigade. The Turks, however, had no intention of advancing by the Tigris line. Suleiman Askeri had now begun to concentrate the bulk of his forces at Nasiriyeh, preparatory to an advance by the desert route against Basra. He intended to observe and hold the British on the Tigris line at Kurna with a minimum force entrenched about Bahran, while a column, composed chiefly of Arab tribesmen under the command of the veteran Mahomed Pacha Daghistani, was directed from Amarah *viâ* Hawizeh to the Karun River at Ahwaz, whence it would menace Mohammerah and the navigation of the lower Shatt-el-Arab.

This latter diversion by the Arabs induced General Barrett to detach a mixed column of Indian troops, under Brigadier-General Robinson, R.A., up the Karun River to meet it. An action was fought early in February, in which our troops were forced to retire, and lost a field gun. However, Daghistani did not pursue his advantage, but fell back to Ahwaz, where entrenchments gave him security.

During this time Askeri's main force was assembling at Nasiriyeh to attack Basra from the north-west by the desert route, and Sir Arthur Barrett threw up an entrenched camp at Shaiba, west of the city of Basra and astride the avenue of approach. The 16th Brigade occupied the entrenchments, and it was soon reinforced by the 18th Brigade, withdrawn from Kurna; and the leading units of the 30th Brigade (which was to be part of the newly formed 12th Division from Egypt) under Major-General Melliss had arrived at Basra and were

sent to the entrenched camp, where Melliss took command as senior officer.

The 17th Brigade (of the 6th Division) was left to garrison Kurna, and the 12th Brigade of the new 12th Division was sent to Ahwaz up the Karun River. This was the situation during March and the commencement of April, 1915.

General Sir John Nixon of the Indian Army had arrived to take command of the whole force, which would amount to two divisions, and thus be called an army corps But the new 12th Division under the command of General Gorringe could not be called complete, as it had no artillery. Sir Arthur Barrett, commanding the 6th Division, left Basra for India, resigning from ill-health, and was succeeded in the command by me ; but before I could reach Mesopotamia the battle of Shaiba was fought on the 14th April. Suleiman Askeri, with about 20,000 Arabs, Kurds (the bulk of this force being irregulars and gendarmerie), and Turks, and 15 to 20 mountain guns, attacked the British entrenched camp. After a very hotly and closely contested battle at Shaiba and at Barjisiyah Wood, with varying success on either side, the Turks, after considerable loss—computed at 3,000 killed and wounded and 800 prisoners—finally retreated to Nasiriyeh, where Suleiman Askeri committed suicide. The loss of the British and Indian troops was very severe. I find in my diary 1,000 killed and wounded, including 18 officers killed and 42 wounded. The battle has often been described to me as a " touch-and-go affair," and Generals Melliss and Delamain both described it to me as a " regular soldiers' battle."

A few days after the battle of Shaiba, I arrived at Basra in the mail boat from Karachi ; whence I had travelled from Rawal Pindi in the Panjaub, where I held a command at the time when I was selected for a division on field service. I had been very unlucky as regards the war in France. Promoted Major-General in 1911, when commanding a brigade in South Africa, I had been at once appointed to command the East Anglian Division of Territorial Troops. In 1913 I resigned command of that Division, and was at once sent to India. The war broke out during the ensuing year, and the 2nd Rawal Pindi Division was, unfortunately for me, kept in India for service on the frontiers. It was composed of magnificent British regiments. I have never seen finer troops in the whole of my thirty-six years' service in the Army ; and, as some of our Indian battalions were the finest in the Indian Army, the 2nd Division in India had been always looked on as the crack division and as the first for active service. It was a terrible blow for us—and the British soldiers were naturally indignant at being kept for service in India. Our finest regular troops, of splendid physique and admirable discipline, kept to do

garrison work in India, were obliged to remain idle whilst armies of hastily raised and improvised soldiers were being sent to France from every corner of the British Empire!

It is well understood that the Government had to keep some troops in India on the North-West frontier, in view of the Afghans and frontier tribesmen; but India, even if it did become engaged in the war, could only be a secondary theatre, and it seems to me that its defence could easily have been undertaken by improvised white troops from over-seas, while highly trained troops, like the 1st and 2nd Divisions in the North of India, could far better have been employed in the Principal Theatre.

My joy can be imagined when one night at the beginning of April, 1915, while I was at dinner at the Rawal Pindi Club, I received a telegram from the Military Secretary to the Commander-in-Chief informing me that I was appointed to command the Sixth Division on field service in Mesopotamia in succession to General Barrett. A few days afterwards I found myself approaching Karachi in the dustiest train in the world, and, I should say, the hottest, with my aide-de-camp, Captain Bastow of the Yorkshire Regiment.

The voyage from Basra to Karachi up the Persian Gulf on the small mail-steamer *Dwarka*, of the British India Steam Navigation Company, occupied some five days. We sailed at midnight of the 18th-19th April from Karachi. There were rumours there that Indian troops from Egypt and France had been ordered to Mesopotamia, and that there were many German officers at Baghdad.

I find in my diary of 19th April, on board the *Dwarka*: "Woke at 6 a.m., sleeping on deck. Course due west—smooth sea—the little packet doing some 14 knots. Land can be seen to starboard about twenty miles off. There is evidently the prospect of our becoming a large army of operations to take Mesopotamia and occupy it, as we have done in the case of Egypt. In the time of Justinian, the Roman Emperor, Mesopotamia was one of the richest wheat-growing countries in the world, with numbers of canals, barrages, and reservoirs. The Persians invaded the country, and destroyed it and its cities, literally with fire and sword. Belisarius, the Roman general who gave a last flicker of glory to the expiring Eastern Empire, who had retaken Italy, Rome, and North Africa from the Barbarians, also partially retook Mesopotamia in 541 A.D., into which country he descended as far south as the fortified city of Ctesiphon. I remember a conversation with Hanotaux in France in 1911 when shooting at my father-in-law's place at Champs. Hanotaux advised me to buy the life of Belisarius, 'for,' said he, 'history will repeat itself, and you may perhaps fight where he fought; these countries will again become a great theatre of war.' Since that conversation we have seen

the Italian Expedition to Tripoli, and we are now fighting in Egypt and Mesopotamia, where Belisarius fought. It is strange how history repeats itself. Who knows that I shall not eventually become military governor of Mesopotamia? . . . . I have reason to be happy now, after the months of misery I have gone through since the war began, kept in India, to do watch-dog's work on the Bannu frontier, and to train troops at Pindi—whilst I was eating my heart out to be in France, which I love as much as England. . . . .

" 20th April.—We entered the horse-shoe harbour of Muscat about 9.30 a.m. We had been hauling into the coast of Oman since 7 a.m. This part of Oman is called the Pirate Coast. Muscat is a tiny town—set in high rocky cliffs, which surround it—with a quaint old Portuguese fort. It is simply the palace of the Sultan of Muscat and the residence of Lieut.-Col. Benn, of the Indian Army, who is political officer here. There was a detachment of the 126th Baluchis and also of the 95th Russel's Infantry, perched up in fortified posts on precipitous heights watching the avenues of approach into the town."

We crossed the bar of the river at Fao at daybreak on 23rd April and were at Basra, some sixty or seventy miles up the Shatt-el-Arab, by midday. It had been very hot in the Persian Gulf, especially at the island rock of Koweit, where we stopped to deliver the mails, and I found it still hotter at Basra. The passage up the river, with a thick belt of palms on either side, reminded me of the Nile at Luxor or Assiut.

General Nixon, commanding the Expeditionary Force " D," was at his residence and Headquarters—the British Consulate—and in the course of conversation he said he was going to give me command of the coming Kurna-Amarah operations. That is to say that he had decided that I should drive the Turks away from their position north of Kurna, push northward ninety miles, and occupy Amarah, a very important town, which, he said, was part of the Basra province. This operation was to be my job. I was to make my preparations as quickly as possible, and send him my plan of operations for the execution of my mission, with which his Major-General, General Staff—General Kemball, R.A.—would furnish me at once. I was allotted a house in Basra, being billeted on a Greek merchant, Mr. Antipas, who was very kind and hospitable, and my divisional staff were installed in the house next door to mine along the Ashar Creek. I arranged for a steam launch to take me up to Kurna in order to see the 17th Brigade and the entrenched camp, and to reconnoitre the enemy's position just north of that place. Before leaving Basra for Kurna I went across the water to Dirhamiyah, west of the city, and inspected the 18th Infantry Brigade, under Major-General Fry, which formed part of my division. The British battalion of this brigade, the 2nd Battalion Norfolk Regiment, was in

Basra in houses to be better sheltered from the heat. I was certainly not impressed with the physique of the three Indian battalions, which, together with the Norfolks, made up the 18th Infantry Brigade. They were all Bombay infantry battalions and could not compare in appearance with the North of India regiments ; but it must be said that, when submitted to the test of regular artillery fire, they were in no way inferior to the Northern Indian regiments, and in some cases were even their superior.

The 16th Infantry Brigade, whose headquarters as part of the 6th (or Poona) Division in India was Belgaum, consisted of :—

2nd Battalion Norfolk Regiment, which had distinguished itself at Shaiba ;
7th Rajputs (detached to Ahwaz) ;
110th Mahrattas ;
120th Rajputs.

I returned in the afternoon to Basra. I inspected the 2nd Norfolks on the following day, and also the 16th Infantry Brigade, under General Delamain, which was quartered in Basra. I left for Kurna soon after in a steam launch.

Basra was the ancient sea-port of Mesopotamia, and we read in the Arabian Nights that it was the home of Sinbad the Sailor. It is now a primitive little place, 70 miles up the Shatt-el-Arab. There are no quays, and few store-houses or other facilities. Ocean-going steamers, drawing up to 19 feet, can ascend the Shatt-el-Arab as far as Basra, and those drawing 7½ to 12 feet can reach as far as Kurna, another 40 miles up river.

The flood season was on, and for miles the river had overflowed its banks. Water extended as far as the eye could reach. Occasionally there were oases of palm trees in little groups or belts ; and, here and there, flat-roofed, mud-built Arab villages on slight eminences resembled islands in an ocean. The scenery reminded me very much of High Nile between Cairo and Assiut. This gave me an idea of the sort of battle I should have to fight near Kurna. It was plain that the only way one could advance was in boats, for during the flood season on the Tigris the banks of the river are invariably inundated, which effectually prevents all marching, or movement of wheeled traffic, over great parts of the country.

I arrived at Kurna the same night, for I had a fast launch. There I had a long talk with Brigadier-General Dobbie, commanding the 17th Infantry Brigade, on the subject of our approaching battle. I had met Dobbie when I was with my regiment, the 1st Battalion Royal Fusiliers, at Mandalay, in 1903 ; and he was commanding an Indian battalion in Burmah at the time. He was well-known as a very brave and very energetic fellow. He told me that the Turkish position was

one of great strength, owing to the deep creeks that ran across the front, with a veritable sea of flood water and thick reeds in addition. The Turkish redoubts were situated on small sand hills, eminences in the midst of the marshes rising out of the water like islands. But I should see for myself at daylight. Dobbie was quartered on the narrow spot of dry land at Kurna at the bifurcation of the Tigris and Euphrates. H.M.S. sloop of war *Odin* was anchored in the Tigris at Kurna.

In the morning I ascended the observation tower, a rickety structure of wooden scaffolding, like a lighthouse on sands, which rose to 100 feet at its top platform, and looked over the tops of the palm trees. Thence I had a very good view of the enemy's position, and I found it a very strong one.

The officers with me explained the position in detail as I used my glasses. Floods, which had overflowed the banks of the Tigris, leaving no trace of its course, gave the landscape the air of Lakes Superior or Michigan in America. Sand-hill islands appeared in these waters. They were Turkish redoubts.

The Turkish main line of resistance was the position of Bahran. There I could see a half-moon of sand hills rising out of the water, some few houses denoting a village, and what looked like gun embrasures in a redoubt or two—all at about 10,000 yards' distance, say six miles. The Rotah and Maziblah positions were just visible. In the foreground was the curtain to the position—the Norfolk Hill redoubt, some 3,500 to 4,000 yards from the observation tower, One Tree Hill (opposite Norfolk Hill) on a sand spit rising out of the water, on what was, in reality, the left bank of the Tigris, One Tower Hill, and Two Gun Hill. They were supported at 5,000 yards' range from Bahran.

The Bahran position was supported by artillery fire from Rotah and Maziblah. Sakricha was at 4,500 yards from Maziblah. I was informed that mines strewed the Tigris channel north of the boom at Fort Snipe, the most northerly point of the Kurna defences. According to our intelligence reports, the Turkish force comprised a small division of some 6 battalions, 10 guns and about 600 Mejahidin (Arab riflemen), the *Marmarice* river gunboat, and some 1,200 marsh Arabs, armed with rifles, and installed in the marshes and thick reeds on the west flank of " Norfolk Hill " and " Gun Hill " redoubts. They were posted there possibly to counter-attack our infantry advance against the Turkish position, or to check an enveloping movement from the westward.

The position of their guns was as follows :—

2 on Gun Hill ;
2 on One Tower Hill ;
4 at Bahran ;
2 at Rotah.

Solely owing to the floods it was a position of great strength. In fact, I had reason to think that Wolfe's job at Quebec was

a fool to mine. Instead of being able to use my Principal Mass in a turning movement against the redoubts from the westward, which was the manœuvre indicated, but which the sea of deep floods and marshes rendered out of the question, I should have to deliver a frontal attack, methodically undertaken in successive phases as in siege warfare. This is the most unsatisfactory and costly manner of attack, and one which, in present circumstances, could not give decisive results if the enemy stood to his guns, as I had every reason to believe he would.

"Talent in a general consists in containing the front of the enemy with a part of his forces, whilst he uses his principal effort with his Principal Mass against the enemy's flank," said General Von Willisen—and, he might have added with advantage, against that flank which lies nearest the enemy's natural line of retreat, viz., his line of communications. Owing to the enormous increase of fire effect, an attack on an enemy's front or centre becomes more and more difficult, and the chances of success of such an attack are enormously reduced, whilst failure may result by the attacking force being itself enveloped and destroyed. Nothing would induce me to execute a frontal attack with the whole of my force under ordinary circumstances, but here was I, in my first command as a general on active service, not only condemned to a purely frontal attack, but in addition my infantry must advance to the attack in boats or be drowned; and, finally, I must use warships in the Tigris channel, if we could fish up the mines! Here was an example of the difference between theory and practice.

I saw I was committed to a peculiarly difficult operation, with an unknown command under me. It seemed to me that the betting was well in favour of the Turks; and I am quite certain that, if I had been in the position of the Turkish General, I should have inflicted a bloody defeat on the British. We won this battle simply through the want of resolution or courage of the Turkish commander, who, instead of standing firmly, fled as soon as I had carried the curtain of his position—as will be seen in the account of the Battle of Kurna.

After a few gunshots to show me the ranges, I returned to Basra. I felt very serious over my job, and it was not difficult to see that Dobbie and his command felt that the prospect was none too rosy. Though they were all stout, hardy soldiers who feared nothing, they thought we risked a disaster in such an attack in boats. But there was no other way of attacking.

It was with great reluctance that I decided that a wide turning manœuvre to the westward of the Turkish position by the El Huir creek was out of the question owing to the impenetrability of the great zone of weeds and water.

In fact, I was greatly impressed by the strength of the Turkish position, and accordingly I asked Sir John Nixon to come to Kurna with me and have a look at it.

CHAPTER III

PREPARATIONS FOR THE ADVANCE AND BATTLE OF KURNA

In my talk with Sir John Nixon on 23rd April, I had already suggested to him a plan or project of operations for throwing the enemy (entrenched astride the Tigris at Kurna) north of Amarah. Since the flooded nature of the country in the region of the Tigris rendered all manœuvre impossible, my plan embodied a combination of a frontal or preparatory attack by my division on the enemy in position astride the Tigris north of Kurna, whilst a strategic turning movement was carried out by Gorringe's division (the 12th) in a westerly direction from Ahwaz or Hawizeh, whence I thought it would be possible to find a route or track, by which he could attain the Tigris about Kalat Salih. I knew the Turks and Germans had found a way from Amarah to Ahwaz *viâ* Hawizeh, and had got guns across. Such a turning manœuvre by the 12th Division would automatically cause the retreat of the force entrenched astride the Tigris north of Kurna.

On 27th April, Sir John Nixon, on my return to Basra from Kurna, said he thought the plan a good one, but that it involved a violation of Persian territory. Of course, he added, if the 12th Division had a fight and beat the enemy they might follow them up in pursuit all the way to Amarah. "This amounts to the same thing as my project," I find in my diary.

As a step towards concentrating my division for battle, I asked Headquarters on this date to allow the 119th Infantry at Basra, which formed part of General Dobbie's brigade, to be sent up to Kurna to be united with its proper command. I also requested that the 17th Company of Sappers and Miners at Basra be sent to Dobbie's brigade at Kurna, and that I should be permitted to push forward Delamain's 16th Brigade to the east bank of the Tigris near Kataiban, some 15 miles north of Basra.

The three trans-Border Pathan companies of one of the Indian regiments were disaffected. It was rumoured that they had fired on their comrades in battle at Sahil, and they said openly that they did not want to fight their brother religionists, the Turks. I suggested to Headquarters that the three disaffected companies should be made into a small labour ...ion at Basra, but that the five remaining companies of

this regiment should remain with my command. They were not trans-Border Pathans and were of excellent quality, and they were, besides, furious that the conduct of such men should represent the battalion. Although short of three companies, I knew the remaining five (of Sihks and Dogras) would uphold the reputation of the regiment.

As regards the Artillery, the Army Commander sanctioned the following for my operation at Kurna :—

Land Section. Land Artillery.
4—5-in. Howitzers, 1/5 Hants, R.F.A.
2—4-in. Guns, 104th (Heavy) Battery, R.G.A.
2—5-in. Guns, 86th (Heavy) Battery, R.G.A.
Group Commander, Lieut.-Col. H. D. Grier, R.A.
These Guns were then in position at or near Kurna.

River Section. Mobile Heavy Artillery on Barges.
2—4-in. Guns, 104th (Heavy) Battery, R.G.A., at the Custom House.
1—5-in. Gun, 86th (Heavy) Battery, R.G.A., from Khora Post (ordered in).
1—18-Pdr. Gun from Ordnance Depot.
Probable Group Commander, Lieut.-Col. Molesworth (for the time being it was to be commanded by the Senior Officer present, 2nd-Lt. Johnson, R.G.A.).

30th Mountain Battery.
30th Mountain Battery on Bellum Rafts (6 guns).
Commander, Major H. J. Cotter, R.A.

Steps were immediately taken by Brigadier-General G. B. Smith, R.A., who was my B.G.R.A., 6th Division, to have the necessary barges and rafts prepared for the above.

I asked General Nixon to add a battery of R.F.A., if possible, for rapid accurate fire at long ranges, but this he was unable to do.

I had 300 rounds per gun for heavy guns and howitzers.

I asked for my divisional signal company to be given back to the division and also for my divisional cavalry.

General Kemball, the M.G.G.S., replied that he quite realised my wish to concentrate my division, " but you must remember that we have no line of communication troops, that the 12th Division is now away, and that your division has to find the necessary troops for that duty."

The sapper companies could not be spared to me.

Thus, when I had shortly to fight a battle, and wished naturally to concentrate my division for fighting, I found that I was supposed to provide not only troops for line of communication work, but that one brigade—the 18th—was kept to garrison a fort at Dirhamiyeh, covering Basra from the south-west. It is instructive to see the way in which Government was starting an expedition to invade Mesopotamia ; all the

mistakes and errors of our maritime expeditions during the 18th and early part of the 19th Centuries are here repeated with interest. Even Bonaparte could not have succeeded with methods like this ; for my battle at Kurna, I was to have only two brigades out of my proper three, although I pointed out that on the Economy of Force principle the 18th Brigade, less one battalion, might be given to me for my battle. One battalion was ample to hold the fort at Dirhamiyeh, which no one was coming to attack. Not only this, but, on the good old Indian plan, all the clerks in the offices of the Headquarter Staff in Basra were combatants taken from my Division ; and, to my horror, I found in addition that all the military police in that place, and the batmen of staff officers, were taken out of its fighting ranks.

Truly a heart-breaking state of affairs for one imbued with the importance of the principle of Economy of Force ! However, I never let the subject drop, and I got Sir John Nixon to ask for a draft of Dorset Territorials from India to fill up the ranks of the Dorsets, who were now reduced to 600 rifles, including employed men. I also begged him to give an order sending all British batmen back to the ranks.

The distribution of the 6th Division, when I took over command at Basra, was as follows :—

16th Infantry Brigade (Brigadier-General Delamain) : Dorsets ; 104th Rifles ; 119th Mahrattas ; 20th Punjabis, at Basra ; 119th Inf. attached.

17th Infantry Brigade (Brigadier-General Dobbie): less 119th Inf. (in Basra attached to 16th Brigade). At Kurna.

18th Infantry Brigade (Major-General Fry) : Norfolks ; 110th Mahrattas ; 120th Inf. ; 7th Rajputs. At Dirhamiyeh.

Some of my divisional troops were attached to the 12th Division at Ahwaz, and my field artillery, the 10th Brigade, R.F.A., were also attached to this division, which had been sent from India with no guns of its own.

On 28th April I again proceeded to Kurna. I had gone into the question of the " bellums "—small country row-boats that the Commander-in-Chief was very keen I should utilise in order to attack the Turks in their positions at Kurna. These " bellums," it was arranged, should be armoured by utilising machine-gun shields fixed on the bows ; 32 shielded and 50 plain were required for a battalion, i.e., 328 per brigade. The water in the Tigris had greatly increased. Three enemy mines had been picked up, six miles from Kurna, by the armoured tugboat *Lewis Pelly*. The mines were moored to each bank on a slack cable, so that if a vessel did not strike one, she must foul the cable, and; forging ahead, drag the mines violently in against her sides. I at once offered a reward of four hundred

rupees to any Arab who found a mine in the river—the effect of which was that hundreds of Arabs spent their time hunting for the Turkish mines.

On 29th April I inspected the 17th Brigade. In spite of the great heat, the Oxford Light Infantry looked particularly fit—as, indeed, did all the rest of the Brigade, especially the 22nd Punjabis, a very fine regiment. The entrenched camp at Kurna I found quite strong; in fact, to my mind; it was too much fortified.

A fair amount of sniping at night went on at Kurna, the Arab riflemen coming close to our camp and firing into it. On 29th April I returned to Basra, leaving Kurna at 11.30 a.m. and arriving at Basra about 4.30 p.m. (The distance was about 40 miles, and we had a strong current in our favour.) There I found that my horses had arrived from India, and were looking very fit.

I found that I had to complain again to General Headquarters at Basra regarding my division being drawn on to supply troops for base and line of communication work. The General of communications, Major-General Davison, gave orders to units of mine detailed for L. of C. work, and the General Headquarter Staff began to take orderlies away from the Norfolks and so forth. The reason was that Army Headquarters in India had allocated no troops for Line of Communication defence. This was not only a source of constant friction between the two staffs, but also a very serious dissemination of fighting force, and nothing could have been worse from a military point of view.

It was reported that two squadrons of the 33rd Cavalry with Gorringe had been ambushed near Ahwaz, three British officers and 12 to 14 men being killed. This detachment of cavalry was on reconnaisance work under Major Anderson. They came across an Arab encampment, where the Sheikh proposed a friendly talk and gave information regarding the position of the Turks. After feeding and watering, the detachment was suddenly attacked by a considerable force of Arab horsemen.

The 12th Division under Gen. Gorringe was now assembled on the Karun river two miles north of Braikeh.

On 5th May I inspected General Fry's 18th Brigade at Dirhamiyeh. It was isolated from Basra by a veritable inland sea, due to the floods of the Tigris and the Euphrates, which had given rise to a question as to whether troops should be maintained on the far side of this great lake, now that they could only be laboriously reinforced in emergency by troops from Basra slowly punted across in bellums.

My bellum with only my A.D.C. and myself took two hours to cross. I landed at "Old Basra," the site, indicated by mounds, of the ancient city of the Arabian Nights. Zubair

is in reality the only remaining part of a once great city. I inspected a new redoubt which was being constructed here. It was practically finished, and I found that it was strong and constructed under good conditions. It contained a well of brackish water, which could be used in emergency. (The water in the estuary near the shore is as salt as the sea.) Much labour was required to level the terrain around this redoubt. As soon as the mamelons were raised, the redoubt would dominate the whole country from the landing place as far as Zubair to the west, up to long-gun range to the south, and to Shaiba fort to the north-west. One battalion I found would be sufficient garrison, with two post guns, supplies for one month for the garrison, and 500 rounds per rifle. This is what I recommended to Sir John Nixon, advising him that the Dirhamiyeh entrenched camp, with its brigade as garrison, was quite unnecessary, and a dissemination of force that should be given up at once and the troops brought into Basra. I suggested condensers being installed in the Old Basra redoubt, also that the Sheikh of Zubair, who had always loyally supported us, should be paid liberally by us, as a means to obtaining quick information regarding the enemy.

Old Basra redoubt would thus be a bridgehead for our troops at New Basra. When the water subsided a proper causeway with a tram line was desirable to connect Basra with the redoubt, which I suggested should be called "Fort George." I believe all these suggestions were carried out.

The staff of the 6th Division when I took command were as follows :—

Personal Staff.

A.D.C. - -	Captain Bastow, Yorkshire Regt.

Staff.

G.S.O. I -	Colonel R. N. Gamble, D.S.O., British Service.
G.S.O. II	Major G. A. F. Sanders, R.E.
G.S.O. III	Captain B. G. Peel, 81st Pioneers.
D.A.A.G. -	Major J. H. M. Davie, Poona Horse.
A.Q.M.G. -	Colonel L W Shakespear, Indian Army.
D.A.Q.M.G.	Captain F. H. Stapleton, 1st Oxford Light Infantry.

Administration.

A.D.M.S. -	Colonel P. Hehir, I.M.S.
D.A.D.M.S.	Lt.-Col. H. O. B. Browne Mason, R.A.M.C.
A.D.S. -	Lt.-Col. A. S. R. Annesley, S.T.C. (Temp. A.D.T., L. of C.).
A.D.T. -	Major E. E. Preston, S.T.C.
D.E.C. -	Lt.-Col. V. W. Evans, R.E.
D.A.D.O.S.	Captain R. H. Begg, R.A.
A.D.A.S	Captain H. S. Cardew, 34th Divnl. Signal Company.

Provost Marshal.

Treasure Chest—Lt. G. C. R. Huddleston, 22nd Punjabis.

The 16th Infantry Brigade at Basra, which I had inspected shortly before, was now flooded out of its cantonments at Basra by the rising waters of the Tigris, and had to be cantoned in the city in houses. I made an attempt to encamp it on the east bank of the Tigris, opposite Basra, but that site was also quickly flooded.

On 9th May I was up at Kurna again. General Dobbie had directed a reconnaissance, which was carried out by the stern-wheeler *Shushan* (an old Nile stern-wheeler), carrying thirty rifles of the Oxfords on board, under command of Lieut. Cookson, R.N. The reconnaissance was to ascertain if the El Huir creek to the west of the Tigris was practicable. The creek proved to be only about twelve feet wide and six feet deep, and a forest of reeds some six feet high made everything from the lower deck of the *Shushan* invisible.

The Arabs opened rifle fire on all sides as the *Shushan* advanced slowly up the creek, and the steamer had eventually to retire with four casualties, Lieutenant Cookson being severely wounded by a shot through the shoulder. However, after having been bandaged up, he very pluckily went on the bridge and brought the steamer out.

On 10th May, I practised the Howitzers on One Tree Hill and Tower Hill—the shooting against the latter with lyddite being particularly good.

On the same day also I received definite orders from Sir John Nixon to drive the enemy from his position north of Kurna and to occupy Amarah. My force consisted of the 6th Division, less the 18th Brigade, some heavy artillery, and a Naval Flotilla, placed at my disposal for the battle.

I have shown above that the mission given to me by Sir John Nixon was one of great difficulty, and involved a hazardous battle—I say hazardous because the floods, having rendered the whole country a great sea, compelled me to a frontal attack, which is the most costly and the most to be avoided in war and the least promising of success. Having won the battle, a pursuit of ninety miles lay before me! At the end of the ninety miles was Amarah, the most important town south of Baghdad, and a seat of government. It had magazines and stores, with a garrison, and so in all probability would be stoutly defended. Finally, my operation was to be continuous. I can imagine not only field officers going up for their examination for tactical fitness scratching their heads over a problem of this sort, but also Major-Generals, had they been treated in such a way for promotion to Lieutenant-General! The Commander-in-Chief in India, talking over this operation with me afterwards, laughed and remarked: "You always said you

would like to be faced with a most difficult problem to be carried out in war. Well, you got your wish in this Kurna-Amarah one."

As I have said, it was known that the Tigris had been strewn with mines by the German engineers with the enemy, and two enormous iron lighters had been sunk in the channel of the river, to block the progress of our warships, somewhere about Rotah.

My instructions from Sir John Nixon, given to me on 10th May, were "not only to drive the enemy from his present positions between the Pear Drop Bend and Kurna and to capture his guns, but also to push him up river and occupy Amarah—the operation to be continuous." If the battle was successful the following localities were indicated to me for attention: Rotah, for employing troops to remove the reported first obstruction in the river; Ezra's Tomb, as a suitable post on the line of communications, 22 miles from Kurna; Kila Saleh, as a post on the line of communications, 56 miles from Kurna, which was the market town of the Al Bu Muhamad tribe, with a population of 2,000; Abu Sidra, junction of the Majar Kebir Canal with the Tigris—a route across the marshes from Nasiriyeh, 76 miles from Kurna.

Amarah is 87 miles from Kurna, and was a Turkish civil and military station of importance.

For the above operation my available force was as follows:—16th and 17th Infantry Brigades (the 18th Infantry Brigade as I have shown was detained for duty in and about Basra); divisional troops comprising the Norfolks and 48th Pioneers, 30th Mountain Battery; 22nd Company of sappers and miners. 86th and 104th Heavy Batteries; 1/5 Hants Howitzer Battery (Territorials); bridging train and a company of Sirmur Sappers and Miners; the 6th Divisional Signal Company (34th Signal Company).

The naval flotilla placed at my disposal for the operation comprised: H.M. Sloops *Espiègle, Clio and Odin;* the armed launches *Shaitan, Lewis Pelly, Lawrence, Miner* (small tug-boats with armoured shields); two naval horse-boats, which carried 4.7 guns.

The *Mejidieh, Blosse Lynch, and P.* 1, steamers to transport troops.

On 11th May I submitted my plan or project of operations to Sir John Nixon in the following memorandum:—

MEMORANDUM "A."

(A) Memorandum on the action I propose in order to take the enemy's position north of Kurna, which lies astride the flooded Tigris, on the line of Maziblah-Pear Drop Bend-Rotah, with advance posts on the line of the Birbeck Creek, i.e., Gun Hill and Tower Hill, Norfolk Hill and One Tree Hill (east bank).

(B) Having taken the above formidable position by the collar, to occupy Amarah, and

(C) Indicate number of troops required to guard the line of communications from Kurna northward to Amarah.

(1) After careful consideration and observation, there are three ways of attack in my opinion, which I will briefly discuss :

1. To attack the enemy in front with the flotilla on the river, co-operating with a minimum force of infantry and the heavy artillery on the west bank of the Tigris, whilst a turning movement attack or offensive wing of manœuvre, consisting of the Principal Mass, would execute a turning movement at the distance of some 5,000 yards to the west of the Tigris, and, by a wide sweeping movement, strike the enemy at Maziblah, menacing his line of retreat. This manœuvre on dry land is the simplest and the best.

2. But the great depth of flood water over the marshes on the west bank, the great depth of the creeks to cross, and the height of the reeds, make the work of wading or propelling "bellums," armoured or unarmoured, most exhausting—and, moreover, the amount of Arab opposition in the marshes, demonstrated in the recent reconnaissance of the El Huir Creek on 9th May, are a sufficient indication that a turning movement by the west is undesirable and almost impossible, save as a desperate attempt.

It is a thousand pities, for such a manœuvre would roll up and clear all the enemy's gun positions automatically with its advance, and would be able finally to close with the bayonet—the one measure which causes the Turks to give way at once, though no one is more tenacious and obstinate behind any kind of defence work which cannot be taken by the collar. If I had dry land to work on, it is the only manœuvre I would undertake.

3. The same manœuvre can be carried out, using the eastern bank of the Tigris for the turning movement by the Principal Mass or offensive wing of manœuvre. This has the disadvantage of having to cross the Rotah Creek and the Tigris River in flood under the enemy's guns and does not menace his line of retreat.

4. Frontal attack against the hostile centre, assisted by an enveloping movement along the eastern bank by a minimum force of infantry.

The frontal attack to consist of the Principal Mass of the force, all the heavy guns, and the flotilla on the river depends for its success on the intimate co-operation of the land force and the ships, and on the effect of the heavy gun fire being what we expect it to be.

The operation to be undertaken methodically in successive phases, with no precipitation, as in siege warfare methods.

After due consideration and observation, as stated above

I have come to the determination to adopt No. 4 above—very reluctantly I confess—but the reconnaissance referred to in para. 2 indicates clearly the risks and dangers and labours of a turning movement by the western bank ; and I have sufficiently indicated in para. 3 the undesirability of the eastern bank for a turning move.

I should carry out the frontal attack on the enemy's position north of Kurna in successive phases :—

1st Phase. The attack on Tower Hill and Gun Hill, to make the line of Birbeck Creek.

5.

Frontal Attack.	17th Inf. Bde., less 22nd Punjabis and half 17th Co.	
Principal Mass. West bank of River.	S. & M. & Pontoons. Half Sirmur S. & M. Co. 22nd Co. S. & M. A Battery R.F.A. Howitzer Battery. Heavy Artillery on West Bank.	Brig.-Genl. Dobbie.
In Ships to land as occasion requires.	16th Infantry Brigade.	Brig.-Genl. Delamain.
River.	Naval steamers (*vide* Memo. B. attached). Armed Steamers do.	S.N.O.
General Reserve. Follows the frontal attack in ships till occasion indicates.	2nd Bn. Norfolk Regt. 48th Pioneers.	
Enveloping Attack. East Bank of river.	Mixed detachments 22nd Punjabis. Half Co. Sirmur S. & M. Guns on rafts (or heavy gun if possible or preferably a couple of 18-pounders on rafts or pontoons).	Lt.-Colonel Blois Johnson.

6. The guns of the frontal attack and of the ships would be concentrated on Tower Hill and Gun Hill, so as to pin the defenders down and destroy their guns, etc., after which Norfolk Hill will be dealt with when the frontal attack advances.

Whilst the enveloping attack on the Eastern bank moves forward from Mezera on a parallel line some 5,000 yards' distance from the Tigris, in order to turn One Tree Hill and enfilade One Tower Hill and Gun Hill from that locality or neighbourhood and get a footing on the sand dunes 3,500 yards east of Bahran, the infantry of the frontal attack (17th Bde.) moves forward, General Dobbie ensuring the service of security of

his left (west) flank by means of a flank detachment (bellums), and a gunboat will proceed up the El Huir Creek with the object of taking up the attention of the Arabs in this direction; infantry in bellums, etc., to take Norfolk Hill and Tower Hill, Shrapnel Hill, and if possible Gun Hill, and get a footing in Alowa and Jala.

7. Under cover of above fire mine-sweeping by protected steam launches with steel hawsers connecting them will be carried out, covering the advance of the flotilla to the mouth of Birbeck Creek and One Tree Hill, where the warships will bombard Bahran whilst the tugs and barges and launches will bring up the heavy artillery from Kurna in order to instal them by means of rafts, etc., at One Tower Hill and Alowa. (Apparently considerable amount of dry ground.)

9. The 17th Bde. will endeavour to instal itself on Gun Hill and Sand Hills; whilst the 16th Bde. will be brought up and occupy Alowa and Jala (utilisation of night if necessary) if possible. I hope not to be forced to disembark the 16th Brigade, i.e., Group No. 1, till I land them at Bahran—whilst the Naval Flotilla would make a demonstration.

The installation of the heavy artillery of the Frontal attack at One Tower Hill and Alowa concludes the first phase, which will possibly take all day if the enemy hold firm.

Second Phase.

10. After mine-sweeping, the naval flotilla should make a dash for Bahran, under support of heavy artillery fire from One Tower Hill and the sand dunes (east bank, western end of the dunes, at roughly 3,500 yards range to Bahran).

11. The 16th and 17th Bdes., Sappers and pontoons at head of columns, advance against Bahran. The Provisional Bde. from the eastern flank crosses the river in the Halla-Jala vicinity (tugs and barges), and becomes the General Reserve to the Division—unless it seems more advantageous to direct it against Rotah, etc.

Third Phase (Maziblah).

12. On reaching Bahran the Division would vigorously attack the line of hillocks and entrenchments with the bayonet, assisted by the fire of the warships, which would enfilade the hillocks from the river. The S.N.O. portioning a ship or ships to incommode Rotah and the guns at Maziblah.

(Removal of possible obstruction necessary for this.)

Memorandum "B."

13. By the commencement of the third phase I should expect the enemy to be on the run, and in pursuit all manœuvres are good

I should embark the 16th Brigade (group No. 1) in steamers to hurry after the gunboats, which would be leading and hammering the enemy, keeping on pushing and hammering them under my orders.

I should accompany the leading troops, leaving the next senior Brigade Commander with orders to collect the Division and follow on in ships, my object being to enter Amarah with the enemy. I should probably have to fight at Amarah and might have to unite again in order to beat the enemy and occupy Amarah.

14. Kurna and the new posts proposed, or rather indicated by you, in your memorandum, you say cannot be furnished by 12th Division troops, nor is it certain when General Fry and the remainder of his 18th Brigade will be given back to me. Once in Amarah and made sufficiently strong to hold that place, I should send back the rest of the Division to Kurna. I think that is what Sir John would wish—as he must keep a Central Mass in his hand in the Basra Zone, I take it.

15. One Brigade should be sufficient to hold Amarah; Kurna would have only one battalion and a gunboat; and say a couple of double companies at Maziblah, half a battalion at Kale Salih, and a company at Abu Sidra. The garrisons to be cut down to a minimum on principle of Economy of Force. In case of success with the Arabs, the riverain Arabs in particular, I should not want to look over my shoulder.

2 battalions in all from Kurna (inclusive) to the last post on line to Amarah.

General Remarks on the above Memoranda.

16. I consider that the above memoranda will sufficiently indicate my intentions to the Army Commander. Operation Orders, of course, I dictate or issue as the occasion arises; for example, only on the day before the first attack at Kurna should I issue my operation orders. They will be short and brief, and all pertaining to the flotilla, rafts, bellums, etc., will be contained in separate memoranda. Otherwise operation orders would become of extraordinary length in such operations as we are engaged in, involving land and sea forces. In the second and third phases I should dictate orders, sent very briefly by signal (probably from the foretop of a warship), in which possibly reference would be made to the numbers of paras. in the memoranda, a copy of which will be issued to all Brigade Commanders, S.N.O., and Chief Staff Officers.

17. I should be glad to have one of my field batteries back from the 12th Division. I want six 18-pounders to mount on decks of steamers. Mountain guns recoil too much, and heavy guns on barges fire so slowly—not nearly rapidly enough.

I should mount
2 on the *Mejidieh*,
1 or 2 on the *Malamir*,
1 on the *Salemi*,
and push these steamers forward into the fight.*

18. I want our own 17th Co. Sappers and Miners back, and will hand over the Sirmur Sappers to the 12th Division (i.e., L. of C.), to whom they probably belong.

19. I want Lt.-Col. Annesley as A.D.S., and a new man as A.D.T., *vice* Swan, invalided.

20. One Marine Transport Officer, Lt. Marsh, R.I.M., suggested.

21. Masters of transports must know the river. *Mejidieh, Blosse Lynch, Malamir, Salemi,* first claim, and the tugs are known, but paddlers should come last, as they are new to the river.

22. L. of C. should take over wounded up to the daily refilling points, and refill us with food, ammunition, Engineers' stores, etc., also E.P. Tents if asked for.

These-refilling points—

Kurna - -	For the day we move out.
Ezra's Tomb	From the day we move our reserve forward.
Kale Salih -	The day our advanced troops reach the next point.
Majar Kebir -	

.E.g, on the day our advanced troops reach Kale Salih the L. of C. should take over Ezra's Tomb to allow my tail troops to relinquish it and move up river.

23. My G.S.O. is working out a list of ships and rafts, including motor boats, which are absolutely necessary for the speedy transmission of orders and seeing that orders are actually and promptly carried out.

MEMORANDUM "C."

24. For mine-sweeping I would suggest that the launches or tugs should be protected on the lines on which we found General Gordon's steamers fortified in 1885, when we met these steamers at Metemmeh. They were very frequently engaged at close quarters on a low hill with Krupp guns in the hands of the Dervishes. They were wooden paddle-steamers of the "Penny steamboat" type, with boiler plates and beams built up on the boats resembling three forts, loopholed, and with a gun forward and sometimes aft. They were very strong and stood lots of shelling from Krupps.

Basra, May 11th, 1915.

* My field artillery brigade had been lent to the 12th Division. The battery I asked for could not be granted me.

On the same day I issued a memorandum on the action I should take addressed to all senior officers in my command, such as the Brigade Commanders, the Senior Naval Officer, and the Chief Staff Officers. In a conversation with Sir John Nixon and his M.G.G.S. the question came up of the independence of the Naval Commander in the combined land and sea operations. I told Sir John that there could be no question of a divided command. I knew by history what that meant. I said that I must be in supreme command, and I asked General Nixon so to inform the S.N.O. General Nixon agreed with me, and this was done.

There was now great activity in Basra in preparing armoured protected " bellums," or punts, to transport the infantry over the floods and marshes to approach the enemy's position ; in mounting heavy artillery on gun platforms erected on iron lighters, and in preparing the steamer transports, etc., etc. The work of Colonel Evans, R.E., and his sappers in this direction was admirable, and I found the former experience of my staff in matters pertaining to transports and bellums invaluable.

The leading feature about the coming battle of Kurna was that the infantry must advance in boats, and the only boats available at Basra were the Arab "bellums," or " balams," on each of which a crew of one N.C.O. and 9 men could be placed. There were only sufficient " bellums " to fit out the 17th Infantry Brigade. I have no space in this book to attach the instructions issued to the division on the subject of the allotment of bellums, and the lists of gear, stores, and rations carried on board these craft, though it might have been interesting to the military student to see the vast quantity of arrangements we had to improvise in order to carry out this amphibious operation, which resembled in some ways the landing operations of Abercrombie at Aboukir in March, 1801, except that my infantry were in " bellums " instead of ships' boats.

I had ordered the 17th Brigade to start training in the poling of these bellums, which is practically the same as punting on the Thames, in the beginning of May, 1915, when I arrived at Kurna. But a bellum contingent was being trained in the 17th Brigade in the beginning of March, with a view to undertaking any amphibious operations on a small scale which might be required in the floods round Kurna. Shortage of bellums and equipment notwithstanding, fair progress was made, and by the middle of April the 32 men per battalion thus trained were an invaluable help in carrying out the more extended scheme of boat-training which I demanded of the brigade. It was now proposed to ship the whole brigade on the bellums across the marsh to attack the Turkish positions up river. To this end a minimum of 126 men per battalion had to be trained, and as many above that number

as time and equipment would permit. Allowing 16 boats per company, 32 trained men were necessary for their propulsion, while a margin above this number was clearly imperative in order to have men ready to replace casualties. During May the work was carried on vigorously, and the shortage of boats was the only handicap to progress. These could not be got from Basra till the end of the month, but on 28th May a full-dress rehearsal took place, and the unusual spectacle of a whole brigade manœuvring in boats was to be seen.

It had been thought advisable by Sir John Nixon that as many of these boats as possible should be armoured with steel plates as a protection against rifle fire, and a successful trial of a boat thus armoured had been carried out on the Ashar Creek. Unfortunately it was forgotten that the marsh round Kurna was not open water, but was covered with reeds of varying denseness, and thus these plates, which projected over both gunwales for several feet and dropped to the water level, considerably hampered the progress of the boat where the reeds were thin, and absolutely checked it where they were thick. However, owing to the protection these armour plates would give from rifle fire, and the fact that General Nixon was strongly in favour of them, they were retained; but a compromise was effected by joining two boats together for stability and reversing the plates so that they did not project below the level of the gunwales. It was hoped that they could be got along in this manner, at any rate during the first part of the attack, where the reeds were not unduly thick, and thus it proved in the battle.

Each battalion had one-quarter of its boats armoured and three-quarters unarmoured. Besides these, machine-guns were mounted on specially constructed armoured rafts, as also was the 30th Mountain Battery, while the field ambulance was provided with light unarmoured rafts. All these craft were provided with light bamboo punt-poles, with auxiliary paddles for the uninstructed men of the crew. The pole was the only possible means of progression through the shallow and reed-grown, but sound-bottomed, field of battle. It is not suggested that all the hastily trained punters were finished watermen, but the general average was good enough to permit of the brigade deploying from line of march into line of quarter column, and advancing thence to the attack in line of companies with a reasonable amount of precision of manœuvre. So much for preliminaries.

I was very sorry to lose the services of Brigadier-General Dobbie of the Indian Staff Corps, commanding the 17th Infantry Brigade, at about this juncture. He was sent home on sick leave owing to an injury, in the shape of a damaged ankle due to a fall on board a transport in a rolling sea. The ankle got steadily worse, and it was decided by Sir John Nixon that

it interfered with General Dobbie's efficiency in the field, greatly to General Dobbie's grief. I asked that Colonel Climo, of the 24th Punjabis, should be made temporary Brigadier-General in command of the brigade, and this was at once carried out.

CHAPTER IV

THE BATTLE OF KURNA

THE operation orders and supplementary instructions were far more lengthy than I could have wished, but I found it impossible to make them shorter owing to the amphibious nature of my force. I found it desirable also to issue these orders a good twenty-four hours in advance of the operation, so as to enable the commanding officers of land and sea units thoroughly to grasp them and to talk them over amongst themselves.

By the afternoon of 29th May I had grouped or distributed the force ready for fighting. The 17th Brigade was in camp at Kurna, ready for their advance, in boats or bellums along the right bank of the Tigris ; the 22nd Punjabis were at Mazera village ready for their advance along the left bank. Both these forces were in oases of palm trees.

No. 1 Group (16th Infantry Brigade), in ships, lay off Mazera in the Shatt-el-Arab.

No. 2 Group (General Reserve), in ships anchored at the tail of No. 1 Group, were lying in the Shatt-el-Arab.

No. 3 Group (divisional artillery) were in barges moored along the quay at Kurna.

No. 4 Group ships were anchored at the tail of No. 2 Group.

I had directed the S.N.O. to place a guard-boat as rear-guard at the tail of No. 4 Group and another as flank guard in the Euphrates. The mine-sweepers *Shaitan* and *Lewis Pelly* were to precede the advance of the sloops of war on the Tigris, which would keep pace generally with the advance of the 17th Brigade.

The heat was terrific, and many were the cases of sunstroke amongst the troops, especially the British ; and on the 29th May I began to fear that the troops would succumb to the heat wholesale.

I was much worried in my mind over the absence of the 18th Infantry Brigade, of which I had endeavoured to obtain the recall from Kurna.* I felt that it should have been united to the division at least for the battle. Basra was only about thirty miles away, and there would have been no danger whatever in leaving Fort St. George for a week. By reason of the floods, and consequent strength of their position, I

* Though I had no bellums for this brigade, I might have been able to put them ashore at Bahran by means of the ships, if I could have made good that locality.

had every reason to expect an obstinate resistance from the Turks in the coming battle, with, probably, heavy losses inflicted upon troops. If such had been the case, the lack of the 18th Infantry Brigade might well have cost me dearly. But, fortunately for me, incompetency and want of courage in the Turkish commander gave me an easy victory.

On the afternoon of the 30th I climbed the observation tower and had another look at the position I had to attack. Everything was ready for the morrow. I looked over the tops of the palm trees to the north and saw a great sea with small yellow islands here and there, which were redoubts occupied by the Turks. I could see other redoubts at Bahran, men moving about, and the masts of the dhows at Maziblah. I still felt disturbed by my inability to make a turning movement of any kind. My attack had of necessity to be purely frontal, and so it was ripe for defeat. Only with difficulty—by taking One Tree Hill on the left bank with the 22nd Punjabis—could I bring a flank fire to bear on Norfolk Hill on the right bank, and thus prepare the capture of the first objective. Afterwards an energetic effort from Norfolk Hill ought to give me the curtain constituted by Two Gun Hill and One Tower Hill, which was that of the enemy's main line of resistance at Bahran.

No one felt exactly comfortable about the mines said to be strewn in the river, and I could see that the Senior Naval Officer, the able and gallant Captain Nunn, also felt somewhat uncertain when I said that I wanted the warships to keep pace with the advancing infantry in the " bellums." I considered that the fire from the warships laid on to Norfolk Hill, Two Gun Hill, and One Tower Hill, would greatly assist the infantry advance as it approached the enemy—would, in fact, make that advance possible. (This proved to be the case.) The main position at Bahran would be the tough nut to crack on the second day of the battle ; I should probably have heavy losses here, and, as I continued my vigil from my lofty perch on the observation tower, I got no comfort from the outlook.

Supposing the attack of the 17th Brigade were repulsed! It would be a veritable disaster, for it would be almost impossible for it to retreat. The labour of pulling and pushing and punting the bellums through the thick reeds was immense, and progress painfully slow. All the wounded would be drowned, practically all the boats armed would be lost, sunk, abandoned, or taken. But on the other hand even if I had 20,000 men I could not take the Turkish positions without bellums, and there were only sufficient for one brigade. It was impossible for the infantry to wade, for in many places the water was out of their depth and the different channels to cross were very deep. The warships could not defeat the Turks alone. The channel of the Tigris was mined, and the redoubts with their guns, though they were only field guns, should not

find it difficult to sink the *Espiègle*, *Odin* and *Clio*, whose armour was practically useless. Fifty years old, these sloops were used to stop the slave traffic on the West Coast of Africa or in the Persian Gulf ; a single shell from a field gun below the water-line would sink them. In fact, the whole battle depended upon the successful advance of the 17th Infantry Brigade.

As I descended the ladders of the observation tower I thought that surely no leader had been called on to fight such an extraordinary battle as was I, in this first command of mine as a general in war. Nor was it comforting to know that the commanding officers of the 17th Brigade had little or no confidence in the " bellum business," and viewed the whole operation with the greatest concern.

Had the Turks stood resolutely to their guns I think we must have suffered a real disaster, such as Pakenham at New Orleans, for example. I could not foresee their precipitate and extraordinary retreat, after I had taken the curtain to their main line of resistance, which was what happened in the battle. I knew that Captain Nunn was anxious about the target his ships would make in the Tigris channel for the guns in the Turkish redoubts. How could they help hitting the warships, moving slowly in single file along the river channel, conspicuous by their great size over the flooded waste ?

My thoughts turned repeatedly to the advance of the infantry in their flimsy bellums, struggling through deep water thick with reeds, in order to close with redoubts pumping shrapnel on them, and I felt rather like a prize-fighter just before a doubtful battle—longing for it to begin. To Whitmore, my servant, who had been with me fourteen years, I said that night that I felt anxious. He replied : " It's all right, sir ; you'll have the Townshend luck all right ! " Though his words were absurd they gave me comfort ; but I don't think anyone else in the command had the slightest idea how anxious I was.

I had decided to make H.M.S. *Espiègle*, the flagship, my headquarters for the battle ; not only could I get an excellent view and perfect control from the forecastle, but the sloop being a full-rigged ship in the old style, I could climb up into the fore-top and see far and wide if I wished to do so.

Before going on board the *Espiègle* that night, I went round the whole fleet in my steam launch, stopping here and there at the different headquarters of groups or brigades. Everyone was ready. I dined with Captain Nunn and lay down in my cabin dressed, as the next day would begin early and be an exciting one for me.

I was up before dawn on 31st May, and at 6 a.m. the *Espiègle* began to glide slowly up stream through the bridge of boats, which had been opened, and through the broken boom. We anchored up stream of Fort Snipe. I could see

from the foretop of the *Espiègle* that Blois Johnson's advance with the 22nd Punjabis in order to turn the position of Norfolk Hill was in full swing on the left bank. Our heavy guns at Kurna began their bombardment of the Turkish curtain position on time. They were supporting the advance of the 17th Infantry Brigade, which now set off in its bellums—and an extraordinary sight it was. To the eastward Blois Johnson's troops were advancing on a wide extent of front and enveloping One Tree Hill. They carried the place with slight loss—advancing at the double as they got within 400 or 500 yards of it, and under a straggly fire from the irregular Arab riflemen, who constituted the hill's defenders.

A few shrapnel burst near the *Espiègle*. We were being fired at from the forts. One or two shells fell into the water alongside the ship, and she was struck once or twice. I came down to the deck as we got under way to keep pace with the slow advance of the 17th Brigade in the bellums. We were preceded by the *Shaitan* and the *Lewis Pelly*, armed tugs, which were mine-sweeping. The *Espiègle* had opened fire with her 4.7 gun from the forecastle, and all guns, land and sea, were now turned on Norfolk Hill, which at a range of some 2,500 yards—the ideal range for the howitzer battery, which was at Nakhailat village—was literally smothered with fire. The reply of One Tower Hill and Two Gun Hill was most feeble. All distances were known to a yard by our gunners, who had been long exchanging shots with Turkish redoubts.

I expected to see the *Shaitan* or *Lewis Pelly*, which were steaming ahead boldly with a chain between them to rake up the mines, blown up at any moment ; but nothing happened, and one began to think that there could be no mines at all, and that the stories of the German experts with their lighter-full of mines was all a bluff ! The truth of the matter, we found afterwards, was that there were plenty, but they were not contact mines, and had to be fired by means of a key on an electric switch. They did not explode as we went over them because the connection had been so long in the water as to become damp. One mine did explode just astern of the *Odin*, which was following close behind the *Espiègle*—and we had already passed over it.

As the 17th Infantry Brigade advanced painfully through the thick reeds, we kept pace with them in the *Espiègle*. The fire of our guns, continually shortening their range, kept the guns in the Turkish redoubts silent. All gun fire was switched on to Two Gun Hill and One Tower Hill as the Oxfords left their bellums and rushed Norfolk Hill with the bayonet. Captain Brooke, the first man into the redoubt, was shot dead at the head of his company. But Norfolk Hill fell into our possession with very little loss. The attack struggled onward against the remaining works of the enemy's curtain—Two Gun

Hill and One Tower Hill—as I signalled to Climo my congratulations on the brilliant dash of the Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry.

The resistance of One Tower Hill and Two Gun Hill to our attack was feeble in the extreme ; in fact, it can hardly be called a resistance. The artillery, land and sea, were all over these two redoubts, which hardly replied. The 4.7 guns of the Naval Flotilla had an especially devastating effect upon them. Soon the white flag appeared on Two Gun Hill, as the 103rd Light Infantry approached it ; and by 11.30 the Oxfords had taken One Tower Hill. Thus the first objectives of the battle—the curtain formed by Norfolk Hill, Two Gun Hill, and One Tower Hill and the line of the Birbeck Creek—was in my hands.

At One Tower Hill I found the redoubt knocked to pieces. A Krupp field-gun and a Turkish lieutenant of artillery were there, the garrison having fled.

The heat was now very great, and the glare of the sun very trying. I got up the whole of the force off the ships on to the reach between Norfolk Hill and Fort Snipe, the head of the convoy being abreast of Norfolk Hill. The 17th Infantry Brigade bivouacked north of the line of the Birbeck Creek, in the " curtain " that it had captured—the 103rd Light Infantry at One Gun Hill ; the 119th at the ruined village of Alloa ; and the Oxford Light Infantry at One Tower Hill. I issued operation orders to continue the attack at day-break the next day on the main position at Bahren, by means of a turning movement to the westward by the 17th Brigade against the perpendicular sand ridge which constituted the position, the water to the left (or west) of it being supposed to be shallow. I ordered the 22nd Punjabis, across the river from One Tower Hill, to unite with the 17th Brigade, while the *Espiègle* anchored just abreast of the deep Birbeck Creek. The enemy's guns did not fire upon us, but when the mine-sweepers turned the bend in the Tigris just north of the Birbeck Creek they were fired at by the guns at Bahran and immediately returned. Every precaution was taken to prevent mines being floated down in the night. So far we had suffered insignificant losses, but I anticipated difficulty with the second phase of the battle. I expected a vigorous resistance at Bahran, and I could not foresee the flight of the Turks in the night.

Several mines were discovered and exploded at One Tower Hill, and the naval people discovered some more in the river. On a little sand island about twenty yards square, which lay some seven hundred yards to the north-west, was discovered the electric keyboard for exploding all the observation mines in the river. It was in charge of an elderly Turkish Naval Officer, who had been unable to get any of the mines to explode. When he was brought before me on the forecastle of the

Espiègle I invited him to proceed straightway into the *Lewis Pelly* mine-sweeper and point out all the mines remaining in the river. We expected plenty of them in our further approach to Bahran. This he did with a quiet cheerfulness I was much struck with, and I was told afterwards that when perched in the bow of the mine-sweeper he was of the greatest use, and was most alert and vigilant on his post. We were all very nervous about these mines, and it was amusing in a way to see how the officers and soldiers moved over the sand hills stepping delicately as Agag. No one could be induced to pick up an old hat or an abandoned water-bottle!

Although the bellums had enabled the infantry to carry out the operation of crossing the floods and thick reeds and taking the redoubts, the armoured ones proved an utter failure when it came to a long advance through such a thickness of reeds. They were also badly left by the light unarmoured bellums even in open water. During the first part of the advance, they had kept back the remainder so long that the second and third companies of the Oxfords passed through them and the armoured bellums came on at the tail of the battalion as a general reserve.

The progress of the attack, I may add, was slow to a maddening degree. For example, though the 103rd Mahratta Light Infantry on the left flank were very little fired at from the redoubt (Two Gun Hill) on which they were advancing, and though the garrison were waving white flags half an hour before they got there, it was late in the afternoon before the redoubt, with its 300 unwounded prisoners and two field-guns, was in the actual possession of the 103rd. It was fortunate for us that these people were so ready to surrender, for Two Gun Hill was out of range of our howitzers at Nakhailat village, and at longish range from the other guns. Hence only two or three of the garrison of Two Gun Hill were wounded and none killed, whilst at Norfolk Hill and One Tower Hill—the former especially—the trenches were found full of corpses.

The night passed in quiet as regards the enemy, and in great vigilance on our part, especially as regarded the security of the flotilla. Early in the evening I dictated my operation orders for the next day's attack on the Turkish main line of resistance. Very brief orders were sufficient, as it was merely a case of continuing the movement with the 17th Brigade (reinforced by the 22nd Punjabis, who had been brought to Tower Hill from One Tree Hill across the river) against the Bahran position in exactly the same way and with the same procedure as in the first phase. The 17th Brigade were disposed in the same way. The 103rd Light Infantry would be on the extreme left flank with the 119th, and would make a wide turning movement against Maziblah and the perpendicular line of sand hills running north from Bahran; while the

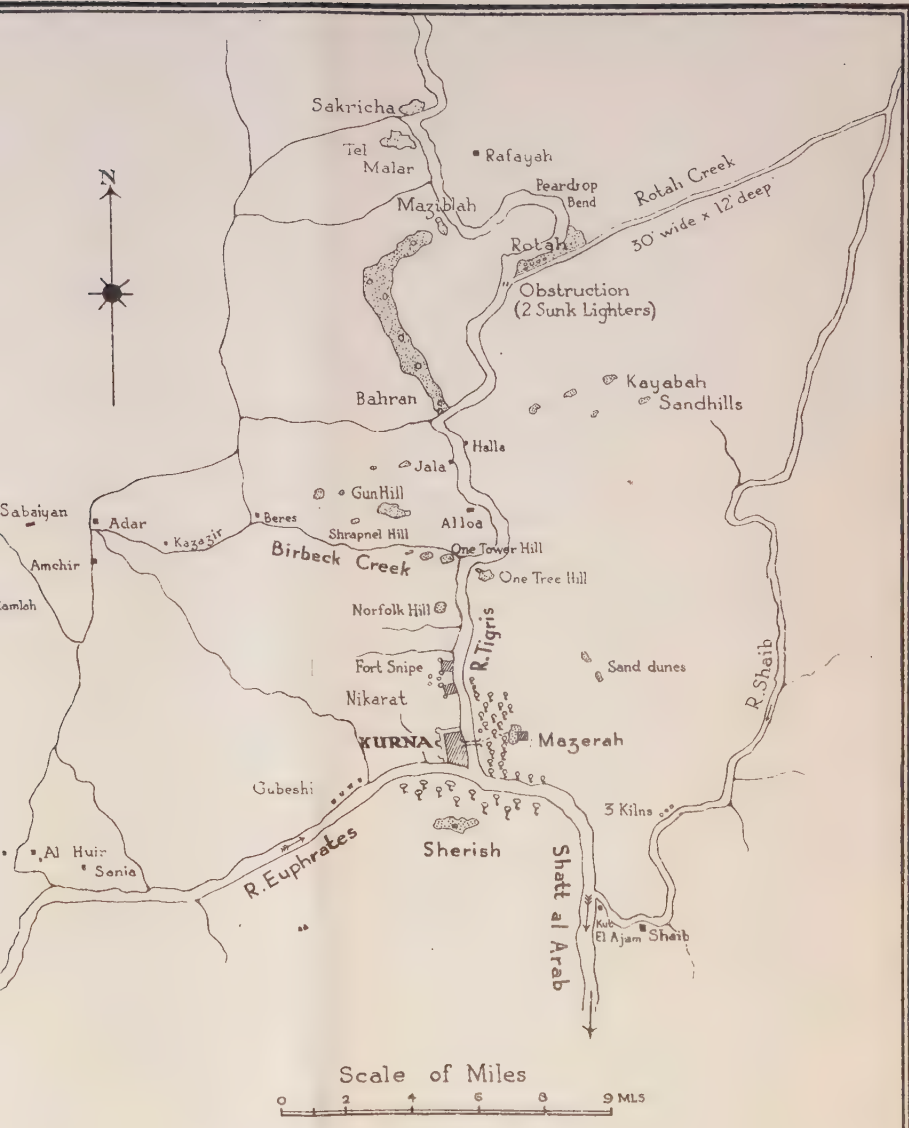
Oxfords, supported by the 22nd Punjabis, would carry out a frontal attack on Bahran. The land attack was to be supported by the fire of constantly advancing warships and the river section of our artillery. I closed up the 16th Brigade in their ships to be ready to land them at Bahran once the Oxfords got a footing there, if the Turks continued resistance at that stage of the attack. The 17th Brigade spent the night in dismantling the armoured bellums.

In the early grey of 1st June we opened fire with all the artillery, including the warships, on the south end of the Bahran ridge, taking the Turkish gun emplacements as the targets in order to sweep the road for the 17th Brigade.

The scattered position of their bivouacs, and the thickness of the reeds, delayed the advance of the 17th Brigade, which had assembled to begin with to the north of Two Gun Hill. As we got under way in the *Espiègle*, leading the ships and always preceded by the two mine-sweepers, I noticed that the enemy's guns were strangely silent, and I could see from the forecastle of the *Espiègle* the 17th Brigade pushing its way laboriously forward. I learnt afterwards that the reeds were so thick on their line of advance that the heavy machine-gun rafts had to be left behind. Thus the act of dismounting the armoured protection of the bellums was absolutely necessary and justified.

Not a shot was fired, not a gun opened on us as the *Espiègle* rounded the bend of the Tigris east of the Birbeck Creek, and in astonished silence we continued to approach Bahran. An aeroplane approached (for three aeroplanes had arrived from Basra and Kurna at daybreak and had proceeded to reconnoitre), and, hailing the *Espiègle*, threw down a message which said that the enemy had abandoned Bahran and were in full flight northward. (This was the first appearance of aircraft in Mesopotamia.)

The troops of the 17th Brigade accordingly occupied Bahran. A half-company pushed to the northern end of the ridge and fired on the last boad-load of Turks, who were shoving off to embark in their transports at Maziblah. It now became a question of a vigorous and rapid pursuit by the naval flotilla on Amarah. I ordered the G.S.O.,I. of the division to assemble troops and transports at Bahran whilst I went on in a steam launch with Captain Nunn, S.N.O., to the mouth of the Rotah Creek to see if the obstruction of the sunken iron lighter, so often reported, really closed the channel, as this might delay my pursuit for as much as two or three days. We found that the sunken lighter luckily only blocked half the channel. There was room even for the large sloops of war to pass to the left of it. Working in water up to the waist and using hatchets, the crew of the launch managed to cut a number of mine cables at this spot, and we then returned to Bahran and the



Sketch map to show Battle of Kurna

Positions above floods are shaded.
The remainder of the country shown on this map was under water.

Espiègle, where I dictated my operation orders for the pursuit as follows :—

6th Division Order No. 19.

1. The G.O.C. intends to push on to Ezra's Tomb.

2. The 16th Brigade will disembark at once with kits, tents and 10 days' rations.

3. G.O.C. 16th Brigade will send a battalion to Maziblah to-day. Remainder of 16th Brigade will remain at Bahran and will be sent for when ships are available at Ezra's Tomb, the transports carrying the 17th Brigade being sent back for that purpose.

3. 30th Mountain Battery will remain at Bahran under G.O.C. 16th Brigade.

4. 17th Brigade and half No. 22 Co. S. & M. will embark on *Blosse Lynch, Mejidieh and P.*1 as soon as 16th Brigade has disembarked, taking on balance of rations.

P. 2 will accompany above ships.

5. Norfolk Regiment on *P.*3 accompany 17th Brigade.

6. River section Artillery—less 18-pr., which remains temporarily at Bahran—accompany 17th Brigade.

63rd Battery, R.F.A., is grouped with 17th Brigade in ships as at present.

7. Order of March for Transport to be issued by G.O.C. 17th Brigade.

CHAPTER V

THE PURSUIT: OCCUPATION OF AMARAH

I saw Sir John Nixon at Bahran before I left. He had come up on his steamer from Kurna, and I told him that I should press on in pursuit in the naval flotilla. I informed him of the orders I had issued, and stated that I hoped to enter Amarah with the Turkish fugitives, thus giving them no breathing time to rally and organise resistance there.

The naval flotilla took up the pursuit, the little *Shaitan*, commanded by Lieut. Singleton, R.N., leading, followed by the *Espiègle*, *Clio*, and *Odin*, sloops of war, and the *Lewis Pelly* and *Samana* tugs. I had remained on board the *Espiègle*. At 5.30 p.m. our two bow 4.7 guns on board the *Espiègle* began to shell the Turkish steamer *Mosul* and the Turkish gun-boat *Marmarice*, which we were overhauling, at a range of some 8,000 yards; but, though we hit the *Mosul*—hulling her two or three times—we had not damaged her vitally when darkness fell, and we found ourselves close to Ezra's Tomb, about twenty miles from the scene of action that morning. There we captured three large lighters full of munitions, and from 200 to 300 Turkish officers and men of the gendarmerie, three field guns and a lighter containing mines.

At Ezra's Tomb I left Colonel Gamble, my G.S.O., I, and other Staff officers, with orders to unite the Division there and send them on to Amarah by echelons of brigades, as rapidly as possible after me. At 2 a.m., when the moon rose, I continued the pursuit in the *Espiègle*, taking only Captain Peel of my staff and Captain Bastow, my A.D.C., with me. During the previous afternoon we had run aground two or three times in the sharp bends of the river, which sometimes left little room for the *Espiègle* to turn, with her length of between 150 and 200 feet and her draught of nine or ten feet. She steered by the old-fashioned hand-wheel between decks, and all the time one heard the voice of the navigating officer from the bridge: "Two turns starboard," or "Two turns port," and the answering sing-song of the quartermaster between decks as he put the wheel over, assisted by another seaman: "Two turns starboard, sir." This all took time, and the action was not quick enough for quick steering in the narrow, serpentine river which the Tigris had become in the great belt of marshes between Bahran and Amarah. We got off very quickly on every occasion, and as the marshes were

soft no harm was done. It seemed to me wonderful that large ships like the *Espiègle, Odin* and *Clio* were navigated at all so high up the Tigris. They had a very imposing and curious effect as they steamed across the immense marshes in the region of Ezra's Tomb. With their rigging and spars they looked more like great full-rigged sailing-ships than steamers. They must have made a great impression on the Arabs.

At 4.20 in the morning we were again shelling the *Marmarice,* which appeared to be on fire and was lying on her side. The *Clio* astern of us had been shelling her vigorously from a bend in the river before that hour. About this time the *Espiègle* grounded, and it was found we could proceed no further owing to the shallowness of the water, which was apparently also the reason why the *Marmarice* was aground. Nunn and I pulled off in a boat to the *Marmarice,* which had been abandoned by her crew. Two large iron lighters full of rifle ammunition and equipment were alongside her. She was on fire, and we did not dare board her, owing to the heat of the flames and fear of her magazine exploding. The Arabs from the marshes, who are well armed with rifles and known as great scoundrels and even murderers, had been busy looting rifles and ammunition out of the lighters before we arrived. Some wounded Turkish soldiers whom we found there said the Arabs had taken a large number of rifles and much ammunition and had murdered many of the Turks, who had fled into the marshes when the lighters had been cast off. Captain Nunn and I now got on board the armed despatch steamer *Comet,* and continued the pursuit with the light gun-boats, leaving the heavy sloops *Espiègle, Clio* and *Odin* some seven miles north of Ezra's Tomb. We found the Turkish river-steamer *Mosul* about two miles ahead of the *Marmarice* tied to the bank with the white flag flying. She had several officers—mostly Turkish medical officers—and a company of infantry on board, with some wounded. They were all very glad to surrender, and were in mortal fear of the Arabs. I noticed that our shells had damaged her upper works, but her hull was all right. At 11 a.m. we continued the pursuit, and at 2.15 p.m. we were in sight of Kila Salih. We had left the marsh country and had entered one of green grass-covered plain as flat as a billiard-table. An army might have manœuvred with ease on either side of the river as far as Amarah. The climate seemed changed from the awful, damp, unbearable heat of the marsh country from Kurna to Ezra's Tomb. It was still very hot, but the atmosphere was much drier. All the Arab villages were displaying white flags, and men, women and children salaamed to us from the banks as we steamed past. This is always the way with the Arab—the greatest turncoat in the world; he will always salaam to those he thinks are winning.

The *Comet* arrived at Kila Salih at 3.20 p.m., after we had

dispersed with our fire a few cavalry and a company of infantry outside the place. They came out on our approach and galloped off after receiving a few shells from the 12-pounder on the forecastle of the *Comet*. Kila Salih seemed a town as large as Kurna. There was a great display of white flags on all the houses. The Sheikh, or head man, came on board the *Comet*, and I ordered him to collect supplies for 15,000 men, for which I would pay. I said that the 15,000 were on my heels and would arrive shortly, hoping that, as is the Arab custom, he would send on the news to the Turks at Amarah by a camel-man directly I had left. I thought that such information might dissuade the Turks from further resistance, and induce them to abandon Amarah and to continue their retreat northward.* We pushed on in the *Comet* till dark, and then tied up to the bank, the *Shaitan* being ahead of us and close by. Several Arabs from villages came alongside on the bank and told us that Turkish troops were at Amarah.

At 5 a.m. on 3rd June we got under way and steamed on towards Amarah, all villages flying white flags and men, women, and children working in the fields waving their hands to us. I halted at Abu Sidrah. We were only twelve miles from Amarah. My first idea was to wait until my leading brigade should arrive in ships, as the probability was that the Turkish troops at Amarah would defend the town. Indeed I felt certain that they would fight, and that it would be ridiculous to attempt to take the place with the armed tug *Shaitan*, with a three-pounder gun and some ten hands as a crew, and the *Comet*, a small paddle-wheel river-steamer, armed with a twelve-pounder and a total crew of fifteen seamen and British soldiers doing work of marines.

Captain Nunn was anxious that I should go on and chance it—as is the way with sailors. But I said emphatically, "No, I won't do anything foolish. I must unite some troops before attacking, for there is *sure* to be a defence." But, after waiting for about an hour, I told Nunn that after all I would go on and chance it. I told him to send the *Shaitan* about two miles ahead as an advanced guard; and we followed with the *Comet*, *Samana*, and *Lewis Pelly*, armed tug-boats, and three 4.7 guns towed in horse-boats.

The *Shaitan*, we saw, continued past Amarah in pursuit of a Turkish steamer. At 1.30 p.m. I was alongside the custom house at Amarah, where the Turkish commander in the battle at Kurna, Halim Bey, the Governor of Amarah, Aziz Bey, three or four colonels and some 30 or 40 officers came on board to surrender. A whole battalion of the Turkish *pompiers* from Constantinople† sent off word that they were ready to

* This ruse paid me well.

† This was one of two Turkish fire-brigade battalions, which had been sent from Constantinople as a reinforcement to Halim Bey, who commanded the 38th Division.

surrender at the barracks ; so I told Nunn to send one of his naval officers. (Two lieutenants were on board the *Comet*.) Accordingly he sent a lieutenant with the coxwain of the boat and a British soldier from the Dorsets, who, I think, was acting as a marine. *These three received the surrender of the battalion* and marched them down to the quay and on board one of the big iron lighters there, as I wanted them in the lighter and anchored in mid stream under our guns ! It must be remembered that I had only about twenty-five British sailors *and* soldiers with me.

To keep up appearances, I made a scene with the Governor, who said he had no supplies available. I spoke of the 15,000 troops close on my heels with a fleet of ships. He said he had plenty of Turkish biscuits. I accepted this grumblingly, and insisted on sheep being collected at once.

We heard the *Shaitan's* gun firing, and thought she was firing on the troops who had fled from Amarah before we arrived ; but on her return at dusk, I found that she had shelled the advanced guard of Daghistani's force, which was retreating on Amarah from Halfiyah, as the approach of a detachment from Gorringe's force, which had been operating from Ahwaz, was forcing them to retire. Apparently they were in ignorance of my occupation of Amarah. On the *Shaitan* opening fire on this advanced guard, which was marching along the Musharrah canal north-east of the town, it at once dispersed and fled across the desert, apparently with the object of hitting off a bend in the Tigris further north. It was followed by what seemed to be the main column. All this was hidden from our view by the town of Amarah, which was between us and this hostile force.

The night of 3rd June passed quickly. A Turkish Engineer officer dined with Nunn and myself. He spoke French—like many of the Turkish officers—and was loud in his contempt for Halim Bey. Another guest at dinner was the Turkish Naval Engineer Officer of the *Marmarice*. He talked English well. I discovered his accomplishment *after* a conversation in his presence between Nunn and myself, in which I told Nunn that I must have all the Turkish prisoners anchored close under our guns, so that we could sink them at once, supposing they guessed my real numbers and tried to escape, which they could easily have done. I kept my friend the Turkish Naval Engineer by my side until the arrival of the Norfolks !

The next morning, 4th June, the Arabs of the town started to loot the residences of the Turkish officials, hospitals, food supply depots, etc. I had no picquets to land and deal with this disorder. The Arabs were removing furniture, carpets, beds, blankets, and so forth, from Government houses and the hospital, and were working like ants on the river front.

What was happening inside the town I could not see, but we could hear scattered rifle shots. It was necessary to check this disorder at once; so I ordered the machine gun on the bridge of the *Comet* to open fire on the Arabs looting the main hospital on the river front. Three or four were quickly bowled over, and the crowd fled, falling over each other and dropping their bundles. Affairs remained quiet along the river front, but the firing in the town increased. The Arabs had quickly learnt how few we were, and realised that, with the seven or eight hundred prisoners I had, I could not spare a man to land. I was very glad when at last I heard that the steamers were in sight. The Norfolks arrived in the forenoon; and there was no trouble after that.

By the evening of 5th or 6th June, I had united all my troops at Amarah. General Nixon and the Headquarter Staff also arrived on his steamer, and he warmly congratulated me on the success of the operation, in which I had succeeded without having a butcher-bill.

It has always struck me that no one, except myself and the officers and men composing the 117th Brigade and the Naval officers, seems to have recognised the difficulty of the operation and the possibility of a disaster. Had I been a couple of hours later in my arrival at Amarah there would have been an organised resistance. It was the report sent on by the Sheikh of Kila Salih that I had demanded food for 15,000 troops, which had decided Halim Bey and all his officers and men to surrender. Those who would not agree continued their flight up river.

Having taken Amarah, my first step was to unite the whole of my division at that point, including the 18th Infantry Brigade, which was still at Fort St. George, west of Basra, guarding the avenue of approach from Nasiriyeh, where the main Turkish force had rallied after their retreat at the Battle of Shaiba. Sir John Nixon now contemplated the taking of Nasiriyeh, utilising my 18th Brigade to reinforce the weak 12th Division commanded by General Gorringe, which, as I have said, possessed no field artillery; after Nasiriyeh was taken I was to get back the 18th Brigade and advance from Amarah to take Kut-al-Amara, which is an important strategic point, both from its trade and its position at the junction of the Tigris and the Hai, the river which connects Kut and Nasiriyeh.

The situation on the Tigris after our occupation of Amarah was as follows:—

According to our Headquarters Intelligence information, the Turkish forces on the Tigris Line, or which could be brought on to it, were believed to be:—

At Baghdad. 1 Turkish regular battalion.
2 Reserve battalions of inferior material
No guns.

At Kut.
1 Turkish regular battalion, which fought at Shaiba.
4 Arab battalions, which fought at Shaiba.
2 newly-raised battalions of inferior material from Baghdad.
12 guns which fought at Shaiba.

In retirement between Kut and Amarah.
Remnants of Halim Bey's force from Kurna.
Remnants of Daghistani's force from Arabistan.
Remnants of two Fire-Brigade battalions not taken at Amarah, 3rd June.

These forces were not sufficiently numerous to be formidable, and a considerable portion of them were known to be in a disorganised state and deficient of artillery. Practically the whole of the artillery with Halim Bey's force had been accounted for, and it was improbable that Daghistani could have taken his artillery with him in his rapid retreat by a detour through the desert. It seemed not unlikely that most of his guns had been thrown into the marshes or abandoned near Halfiyah, as it was his advanced guard only which reached Amarah—and then found themselves cut off by the 6th Division. His guns were all behind on 3rd June.

The reinforcements which the Turks might receive from Anatolia or the Caucasus, it was said, had to make a long and trying march of several weeks to reach Baghdad. Moreover, it was pointed out that it was extremely unlikely that any efficient formations could be spared from the main Turkish forces in either direction, and no reliable confirmation had been received by our Intelligence of the despatch of any such reinforcements to Baghdad. Our Intelligence Department had agents in that city, and so could rely on getting timely information of the arrival of large numbers of troops there.

It was consequently the view of the Headquarter Staff of the Force in Mesopotamia that though a new Commander, Nureddin Bey, had reached Baghdad from Constantinople, it would be beyond his powers, no matter what his ability might be (for he was reported to be an able officer), to make an effective attack with his present resources on my two brigades of the 6th Division in and near Amarah, supported by heavy artillery and Naval guns, and now provided with aeroplanes, wireless telegraphy, etc. I had an efficient Naval force to rely on, while such steamers as the Turks still had on the Upper Tigris were known to be deficient in coal, oil, and stores of every description.

Our communications with Kurna were constantly interrupted by the marsh Arabs, who cut the telegraph line between Kila Salih and Ezra's Tomb, and this state of affairs called for immediate punishment by line of communication troops, or payments to the marsh Arabs by our political department.

Sir John Nixon asked me to send in my views on the quartering of my division at Amarah prior to my advance in September against Kut-al-Amara. I proposed an advanced mixed detachment of security of two companies some 40 to 50 miles—one or two days' steaming—north of Amarah on the Tigris, there to instal an aviation landing ground as a base for reconnaissances on Kut-al-Amara; the bulk of the division to remain united at Amarah, entrenched lightly on the right bank of the Tigris opposite the town, which would remain tranquil under the menace of our guns. The Arab population of Amarah was decidedly hostile to us and friendly to the Turks, and I considered that it was most undesirable to have my troops quartered in the narrow streets and lanes of the town.

I suggested that a small detachment of security be installed at Halfiyah, some 16 miles south-east of Amarah on the Musharrah Canal, because it seemed of importance and controlled a route to Ahwaz, by which Amarah could be turned; this detachment could be united to the division at Amarah in a few hours by steamer. I proposed also to have a detachment of one company at Kila Salih, twenty miles south of Amarah. This is an important town, but, as I had failed to get Headquarters to hold it by line of communication troops, I cut its garrison down to a bedrock minimum. It was like getting blood out of a stone to ask Headquarters to supply line of communication troops for their legitimate work. They had none to give me. To use first-line troops for line of communication work is an absolute violation of the principle of Economy of Force. In Mesopotamia, where we had to make bricks without straw, line of communication troops were invariably improvised out of the first-line troops. I was to find this custom a most serious danger in my advance beyond Amarah.

I asked for six months' reserve of supplies to be placed at Amarah, and for a supply of gun and rifle ammunition in proportion, i.e., 1,000 rounds per rifle and 500 per gun. It is a commonly accepted principle of war that any isolated force which may have to hold its own unaided—as mine might well have to do—should be able to last out for a period of six months.

I said that if Nureddin advanced against me at Amarah, I should take the offensive as soon as he arrived within a day's march. I intended that my action should be the "defensive-offensive." I was going to hold Amarah with a minimum force, which would be entrenched on the opposite bank of the town, and manœuvre against the bulk of Nureddin's force with my Principal Mass.

Sir John Nixon approved of my idea of keeping the bulk of the force together as a striking force.

He approved of a double company being posted forty to fifty miles above Amarah on the Tigris to cover an aviation landing ground.

He was not convinced of the necessity of a detachment at Halfiyah.

He approved of the post and detachment for Kila Salih.

With regard to the garrison of Amarah, my proposal to place it mainly on the right bank and thus to avoid the town, he said appeared to contemplate danger from the town and its inhabitants, and he did not share my view. He was of opinion that, in order to keep the town secure and to maintain the continuance of trade, it was necessary for the force left in Amarah after the withdrawal of the striking force, to be quartered on the same side of the river as the town, with such bridge-heads as might seem desirable. He also considered it advisable to make use of the excellent arsenals, stores, etc., already in existence in the town, and he was adverse to placing our advanced depots on the right bank, where there were not suitable buildings or wharfage accommodation.

As regarded the location of my "Striking Force," he advised me to consult my Assistant Director of Medical Services before I moved my British troops from buildings during the summer, but otherwise he was prepared to accept any arrangements for the location of the rest which I thought fit. He was, however, averse to putting troops into tents or huts while buildings were available.

My request for six months' reserve of supplies seemed to him to be based on a misapprehension of the authorised arrangements for supply in the force under his command. Six weeks' reserve was the total amount for the Mesopotamian Army, as authorised and supplied by Headquarters in India. For good reasons, such reserve was unlikely to be increased.

I should be made up to this and kept supplied by the Indian General Command, with such reserves as the Army Commander considered necessary from time to time, and for the present my reserve would not be less than one month, exclusive of local supplies.

The amount of gun and rifle ammunition in Divisional charge would be the amount authorised by Regulations to be in the hands of troops, plus that authorised in Divisional Ammunition Column.

A further stock would be in charge of the Ordnance Advanced Depot on the line of communications, which would be located at Amarah. The Indian General Command was responsible, he said, for keeping the stock in this depot up to the amount fixed from time to time by the Army Commander, and ample ammunition for all emergencies would be available for me.

I give a copy of my reply :—

Head-Quarters, 6th Division,
Amarah, 6th June, 1915.

To

The Major-General, General Staff,
Army Head-Quarters.

Memorandum.

Your 139/113–0.

2. Para. 1 noted.

3. Your para. 2 noted—I am proceeding to-morrow or the day after to select it.

4. Your para. 3. I willingly give up the idea of this detachment, since all detachments are undesirable—but from the fact that the Turks held on to it so long, and it is of certain importance as regards Halfiyah and Ahwaz, etc., and local Arab influence, I judged it important enough to have a detachment which could be united to the Division in a day.

5. Your para. 5. The Army Commander's orders, of course, will be obeyed, but I must say that in case I have to take away my striking force and leave a battalion alone here, I do consider, and nothing will alter my opinion, that there would be great danger to the battalion in the town amongst the Arabs, with a large force of Turks coming down to attack us. The town is held in respect by our guns on the west bank.

I am quite aware of the advantage of using the excellent Turkish magazines, which are, however, on the wrong side of the river, and I could easily have taken the town, had I had to fight for it, by attacking it from the west bank with my troops whilst the gunboats attacked by water.

6. Your para. 6. I did not propose to order British units from their buildings during the present season.

7. Your para. 7. I naturally have to consider the position of an isolated weak Division at Amarah from a purely tactical point of view—to leave a force up here with only 6 *weeks'* reserve I do not consider sound—6 *months'* is the commonly accepted principle for any force which might possibly be isolated and have to hold its own unaided. This is why I said 6 months.

If I only get one month from you I shall purchase supplies and store them up.* For example, the I.G.C. would not be able to help me much if you get repulsed at Nasiriyeh whilst I am menaced from Baghdad and the marsh Arabs are between us. Directly you go for Nasiriyeh, Nureddin Pacha, unless an absolute fool, will move forward and menace me from Baghdad. That is certain.

As regards ammunition, I asked for 1,000 rounds per rifle and 500 rounds per gun for the same reason as I did for six months' reserve of supplies, and I do not think "regulations" should come into the question.

* This I proceeded to do, and these supplies were eventually magazined in Kut-al-Amara.

I note what you say *re* the Ordnance Advanced Depot at Amarah.

8. I will order my staff to prepare a reply to your 139/111–0 in a concrete form based on my project of operations, and will send it to you in a couple of days, as some details regarding bridging are involved.

C. V. F. TOWNSHEND,
Major-General,
Commanding 6th Indian Division.

I then proceeded on a reconnaisance some forty miles up the Tigris, and General Nixon returned to Basra to push on the preparations for taking Nasiriyeh, an operation which was to be undertaken by General Gorringe, my 18th Brigade and all the field artillery of my division being borrowed for the operation. I found that my artillery, together with my Sappers and Miners, was continually being taken away from me for operations in the Euphrates or Karun Valleys. In my opinion this was just as grave a defect in our organisation as the want of land and river transport, medical stores, etc., so severely censured by the Mesopotamian Commission.

Such was the operation of the taking of Amarah on 3rd June. So great was the heat and unhealthy the climate that between eleven and twelve hundred men were on the sick list ten days after we reached Amarah, and I had left large numbers of sick at Kurna in addition.

On returning from my reconnaissance beyond Amarah I had what I thought was a touch of the sun, accompanied by vomiting and diarrhœa. In three days I was as weak as a child with "relapsing fever." The doctors at Bombay afterwards told me that it was a brand of fever peculiar as a rule to East Africa. I was taken down to Basra, as we had no ice at Amarah. There I saw Sir John Nixon, who had me put on board a hospital ship going to Bombay, in the hope that the change of air would do me good. I engaged to be back in a month, for I had the task before me of advancing from Amarah to take Kut-al-Amara at the beginning of September. It was only my splendid constitution that pulled me through. I had a narrow shave for my life on that voyage, on which Major Simmons, I.M.S., well known as one of the best doctors in the service, and one of the kindest men I have ever met, gave me every comfort and care.

After a week in St. George's Hospital at Bombay, I was taken to Simla, at the request of my friend, Sir James Roberts, I.M.S., and I stayed for a time at his house. Here an operation was performed on me, and I got rid of the fever quickly. Though very weak and hardly able to walk upstairs, I left Simla for Basra at the end of July, having stayed with the

Viceroy, Lord Hardinge, and seen the Commander-in-Chief, both of whom were very flattering over the Kurna-Amarah operation.

The heat in the train between Lahore and Karachi tired me very much in my weak state, as also did the great heat in the Persian Gulf and the heavy sea there, owing to the monsoon.

During the first week in August I reached Basra again. There I saw Sir John Nixon regarding my advance on Kut-al-Amara, which had been decided on by Government while I was at Simla.

APPENDIX PART I

MEMORANDUM ISSUED BY ME TO ALL SENIOR OFFICERS
e.g.,
BRIGADE COMMANDERS, S.N.O., AND THEIR CHIEF STAFF OFFICERS.

SECRET.

1. DISTRIBUTION OF THE DIVISION INTO NUMBERED GROUPS FOR THE PURPOSE OF FACILITATING AND SIMPLIFYING OPERATION ORDERS, MOVEMENTS, QUARTERING, HALTING, ETC.

ADVANCED GUARD GROUP. Brig.-Genl. DOBBIE.
17th Infantry Brigade.
Oxfords.
103rd L.I.
22nd Punjabis.
119th Inf.
½ 22 Co. S. & M.
30th Mountain Battery.
1 Secn. Brit. Fd. Amb.
2 Secns. Ind. Fd. Amb.
1 Secn. No. 34 Div. Sig. Co.
The Ships allotted to this group fly **Red** flags.

No. 1 GROUP.
16th Infantry Brigade. Brig.-Genl. DELAMAIN.
Dorsets.
104th Rifles.
117th Mahrattas.
1 Secn. Brit. Fd. Amb.
1 Secn. Ind. Fd. Amb.
½ No. 22 Co., S. & M.
The ships allotted to this Group fly **Green** flags.

No. 2 GROUP. (GENERAL RESERVE) at the disposal of the G.O.C. Division.
2 Norfolk Regt.
48 Pioneers.
The ships allotted to this Group fly **Yellow** flags.

NO. 3. GROUP. (ARTILLERY.) Brig.-Genl. SMITH.
Class 1. Land Artillery.
Class 2. Mobile Heavy Artillery on barges.
Class 3. Mobile Light Artillery.
The ships allotted to this group fly **Blue** flags.

No. 4 GROUP.
Divisional Ammunition Column, including that for Heavy Artillery, etc.
Hospital ship. Bridging material. Repairing boat.
Engineer stores.
Flags: **Left half Blue, other half White.**

No. 5 GROUP.

Divisional Supply Column—food supplies—are divided up amongst the Groups in their barges, so for the present No. 5 Group does not exist.

Flags: **Blue with White Ball.**

THE ATTACK ON THE TURKISH POSITION NORTH OF KURNA.

2. A POSITION IN READINESS will be taken up by the force on the afternoon of 29th May.

The **Advance Guard Group** at Kurna on land.

No. 1 Group in Ships lying off **Mazera** in the **Shatt-el-Arab.**

No. 2 Group in Ships at the tail of **No. 1 Group** towards the mouth of the **Suwaib.**

No. 3 Group in Ships south of **Kurna** in the **Euphrates** and east of the Camp at **Kurna** in the **Tigris** along the quay at **Kurna.**

No. 4 Group at the tail of **No. 2 Group.**

3. THE S.N.O. will detail the stations of his flotilla and warships and will be requested to furnish a guard boat west of **No. 3 Group** in the **Euphrates ;** and another guard boat at the tail of **No. 4 Group ;** and he will order the mine-sweepers to be in readiness and will indicate the hour at which the bridge of boats, net, and boom are to be broken. Order will be issued by 6th Division Staff accordingly.

4. G.O.C. AND HEAD-QUARTERS DIVISION on board H.M.S. **Espiègle,** the Flag Ship.

5. MISSION OF G.O.C.

My mission is not only to drive the enemy from his present position between the **Pear Drop Bend** and **Kurna,** but also to pursue him and occupy **Amarah.**

6. GENERAL INTENTION OF G.O.C. *Here followed practically the same memorandum as in my plan of operations submitted to Sir John Nixon.*

The following remarks were made on my plan of operation by the Commander of Expeditionary Force " D ":—

39/57/0
19/5/15

G.O.C.,
6th Division.

With reference to your Secret Memorandum *re* **Kurna.**

Please read the accompanying by the A.C., to which he wishes me to add the following observations.

1. The success of the operations with which you are entrusted will depend greatly on the Staff work, and especially on the clearness and completeness of the Operation Orders.

The A.C. desires that these orders may be framed with great care, and that the instructions contained in the Field Service Regulations be closely followed. Any memoranda issued in addition to Operation Orders are to be as few and terse as possible.

2. Orders regulating the action of the Artillery should be very clearly worded, as there is some ambiguity in paras. 8 and 9 of your Memorandum, and the *rôle* of the Mountain Battery is not mentioned. In this matter please take the fullest advantage of Brigadier-General Smith, who is placed at your disposal for the purpose.

3. Another point to be noted is that it is most important that from the outset **there should be a clear understanding between yourself and the S.N.O. as to the *rôle* of the R.N., and I am to suggest that you should acquaint the S.N.O. as soon as possible with your wishes and ask him to draft thereon the necessary paras. *re* Mine Sweeping* Support by Gun Fire, etc., etc., for insertion in Operation Orders, so that there may be no room for any misapprehension.**

4. The A.C. agrees with your view as to the impracticability of landing heavy artillery on the localities named in paras. 12 and 15 of your Memorandum and thinks it would be wise to abandon the idea at once.

* It was simply notified in Operation Orders that the O.C. Mine Sweeping craft " has received full instructions from the S.N.O.," otherwise the length of the operation orders would have been needlessly bulky and great.

5. As regards the movement of your Turning Attack :—The A.C. sees little prospect of providing any diversion on the Eastern flank such as that arranged on the Western flank via the **El Huir** Creek.

Possibly this may lead you to modify your intention as stated in para. 8, that the turning attack which has **One Tree Hill** as its first objective is to move at a distance of some 5,000 yards from the river.

Such a movement, even though protected by a flank guard, would be liable to afford an enemy in the rushes bordering the **Suwaib** an opportunity of harassing and possibly delaying that advance, since Arabs hidden in the reeds are somewhat difficult to deal with.

6. As regards para. 9, there are certainly arguments in favour of delaying the attack of the 17th Brigade until the Turning Attack is closing on **One Tree Hill**, but I am to ask you to consider that the latter attack will take a considerable time to reach such a locality, and that it will be at some distance from any support, in a somewhat isolated position, and further, that the Mine Sweeping cannot well proceed past **Norfolk Hill,** until that position has been cleared of the enemy's riflemen by an advance from the neighbourhood of **Fort Snipe.**

7. With regard to the proposed use of 18-pr. guns on rafts, as contemplated in para. 8 of your Memorandum. Such information as is available at General Head-Quarters rather points to the fact that the water is too shallow for the manœuvre in question.

It would be as well to verify its possibility, as there appears to be some chance of the rafts stranding.

8. The Operation Orders, which the A.C. wishes to see now, need only deal with the first phase of the operations ; but there is no need to exclude from that phase operations for the capture of **Bahran**, should the course of events render this objective attainable on the first day.

It is recognised, however, that the precise orders for such an attack cannot be included in Operation Orders, but will have to be issued by you in the field.

9. As regards para. 23 : The removal of the obstruction is a Military Operation, but I am to inform you that the S.N.O., who was consulted on the subject some time ago, expressed his readiness to give every assistance in his power.

E. V. KEMBALL,
M.G.G.S.

19/5/15.

M.G.G.S.

I don't think Genl. Townshend should issue the lengthy " intentions " in para. 6.*

It is contrary to practice and concerns nobody but himself.

There are several points I have discussed with you, which please bring to his notice.

In his general remarks, General Townshend says he will issue Operation Orders and separate Memoranda the day before the operation. To enable me to form an opinion, please ask him to reduce them to writing now that I may see them, and to let me have them as soon as he can.

JOHN NIXON,
Genl.

19/5/15.

OPERATION ORDERS FOR THE BATTLE OF KURNA.

6th DIVISION ORDER No. 16.

28th May, 1915.

Reference map of Kurna 1-in. to 1 mile.

GENERAL SITUATION.

1. (*a*) No pronounced change in the enemy's dispositions in his positions astride of the **Tigris** north of **Kurna.**

His main positions are chiefly the localities of **Bahran ; Rotah ; Maziblah ;**

* The Memorandum was to explain fully to Sir John what my idea was in attacking, and had nothing to do with operation orders.

Sakricha : advanced posts to the **Rotah** position on the sand hills and to the **Bahran** position at **Norfolk Hill ; One Tree Hill ; One Tower Hill ; Gun Hill.**

(*b*) The advanced posts, **One Tower Hill ; Gun Hill ; One Tree Hill,** are supported at under 5,000 yards range from **Bahran** (**One Tree Hill** at under 6,000 yards).

The **Bahran** position is supported by artillery fire from **Rotah** and **Maziblah ;** and **Sakricha** is at 4,500 yards from **Maziblah.**

(*c*) It is probable that mines are placed in the **Tigris** channel north of the boom at **Fort Snipe.**

(*d*) According to our intelligence reports, the Turkish force comprises some 5 battalions, 10 guns and about 600 Mujahidin, the **Marmarice** river steamer, and some 1,200 Arab riflemen with one of the guns mentioned above in the marshes on the West flank of **Norfolk Hill and Gun Hill,** possibly to counter-attack our infantry advance along the West side of the **Tigris.**

The position of the guns are as follows :—

1 gun at **Rumla** (in marshes to W.).
2 guns on **Gun Hill.**
1 gun on **One Tower Hill.**
1 gun at **Bahran** (at Eastern Tower).
1 gun at **Rotah.**
4 guns newly arrived and not yet located, but thought to be :—
1 at **Rotah,**
3 at **Bahran.**

(2) The flooded state of the country renders the above a position of strength, and demands an operation methodically undertaken in successive phases as in siege warfare, every effort being made to obtain concentric fire action by the forces on the West side of the **Tigris,** the Naval Flotilla and the force on the East side of the river.

GENERAL INTENTION OF G.O.C.

2. The enemy will be attacked on May 31st by combined Frontal and Turning Attacks.

(*a*) Frontal attack. A frontal decisive attack, supported by the Artillery and the Naval Flotilla, will move against the enemy's position on the West side of the **Tigris,** assisted by a Turning attack on the East side of the **Tigris.**

(*b*) DEMONSTRATIONS on EAST and WEST.

In order to engage the attention of the Arabs on both flanks of the Turkish positions, demonstrations up the **Suwaib** and **El Huir** Creeks by friendly Arabs, supported by gunboats, are being arranged by Army Head-Quarters.

3. DISTRIBUTION OF TROOPS FOR THE 1st PHASE.

(*a*) ADVANCED GUARD GROUP.

FRONTAL ATTACK.	17th Infantry Brigade (less 22nd Punjabis), with Brigade Sig. Secn.
Lt.-Col.	½ Sirmur Sappers and Miners.
CLIMO,	30th Mountain Battery (less 1 Secn.).
D.S.O.	1 Secn. Brit. Field Ambulance.
Red Flags.	1 Secn. Ind. Field Ambulance.
TURNING ATTACK.	(*b*) 22nd Punjabis.
	1 Secn. 30th Mountain Battery.
Lt.-Col.	½ Co. Sirmur S. & M.
BLOIS JOHNSON.	1 Secn. Ind. Field Ambulance.
Red Flags.	
C.R.A.	(*c*) No. 3 GROUP. ARTILLERY.
Blue Flags.	Land Section.
	River Section.
	½ No. 22 Co., S. & M.
	Bridging Train.

No. 1 GROUP.	(*d*) 16th Infantry Brigade, consisting of :—	
G.O.C. 16th	2nd Dorsets.	
BRIGADE.	104th Rifles.	
Green Flags.	48th Pioneers.	
	Brigade Sig. Secn.	
	63rd Battery, R.F.A.	
	½ No. 22 Co., S. & M.	
	1 Secn. Brit. and 2 Secns. Ind. Fd. Amb.	
	All in ships.	
GENERAL RESERVE.	(*e*) 2nd Norfolk Regt.	on ships.
	1 Secn. Brit. F.A.	
Lt.-Col. PEEBLES, D.S.O.	1 Secn. Ind. F.A.	

4. ORDERS FOR THE ATTACK, FIRST PHASE.

OBJECTIVE, the line of the **Birbeck Creek.**

(*a*) At 5 a.m. on May 31st the Artillery (Land Section) will commence a bombardment of the enemy's position, their fire being distributed on :—

Norfolk Hill,
One Tree Hill,
One Tower Hill,
Gun Hill,

in accordance with the detailed instructions issued by the C.R.A. The Naval Flotilla will co-operate against **Norfolk Hill** and **Gun Hill.**

The River Section will be in readiness to move up when ordered from their *rendezvous* position at **Kurna.** The tugs are allotted for this purpose.

(*b*) The **Frontal Attack** will advance from its position of assembly **West of Fort Snipe** at 6 a.m. Objectives :—

Norfolk Hill,
One Tower Hill,
and
Gun Hill.

The O.C. will ensure the protection of his left flank during this advance.

(*c*) The **Turning Attack** will start from its *rendezvous* at 1 a.m. Objective :—**One Tree Hill.** The O.C. will time his movement so as to conform with the artillery bombardment.

(*d*) The O.C. **Turning Attack** will detail a party to look for and explode by rifle fire all mines found along the river bank.

(*e*) Mine-sweeping operations by the Naval Flotilla will be conducted under orders of the S.N.O. during the Artillery bombardment.

The subsequent forward movement of the Warships and River Section barges will be regulated by the progress of the mine-sweepers.

5. No. 1 (16th Bde.) GROUP and No. 2 (General Reserve) GROUP in transports will be brought up the **Tigris** when ordered as follows :—

Mejidieh,
Blosse Lynch.
P1.
P3.

6. The Ordnance barge, Hospital Ship and R.E. Park (**Group 4**), and the Divisional Supply Column (**Group 5**), will remain at **Kurna** till ordered up.

Medical—

7. The Dressing Station of the force will be on **Norfolk Hill.** This will be provided by the Field Ambulance attached to the General Reserve.

Reports—

8. Reports to Divisional Head-Quarters on board H.M.S. **Espiègle** from 6 p.m. on May 30th.

R. N. GAMBLE, Colonel,
General Staff.*

Issued at 8 p.m.

* I had to leave the 117th Infantry, which belonged to the 16th Infantry Brigade, in garrison at Kurna. This was the minimum force I could leave, for it was possible that a serious counter-attack by the marsh Arabs might be made on Kurna as soon as the Turkish Commander saw us advancing against his position.

PART II—KUT

CHAPTER VI

THE ADVANCE FROM AMARAH AGAINST KUT-AL-AMARA

At Simla, on 7th August, I was passed by a medical board as fit to return to Mesopotamia to resume my command, and I see by my diary that I had gathered that we were to advance on Baghdad. The following letter shows this. It is dated Simla, 8th August, 1915, and was written to a friend* of mine then in a high place at the War Office in London :—

" You will be surprised at the address, but I got relapsing fever at Amarah, about 9th June, and was sent on a voyage to Bombay to get well, thence up to the hills to Simla. I passed the medical board yesterday and sail from Karachi on 15th August, to resume my command in Mesopotamia. I have been very ill, but made a rapid recovery, owing, the doctors say, to my good constitution.

" I believe I am to advance from Amarah on Kut-al-Amara directly I get back to my division, my headquarters being Amarah. The question is where are we going to stop in Mesopotamia ? I stayed with the Viceroy last month, but could not get anything out of him as regards our policy in Mesopotamia. We have now got possession of the ancient province of Basra, which is marked out by the various places, Amarah, Nasiriyeh, Basra.

" We have certainly not good enough troops to make *certain* of taking Baghdad, which I hear is being fortified, and guns of position are being mounted there. We can take no risks of a defeat in the East. Imagine a retreat from Baghdad and the consequent instant rising of the Arabs of the whole country behind us, to say nothing of the certain rise in that case of the Persians and probably of the Afghans in consequence, for the Amir is only keeping his country out of the war with difficulty. You can afford to have reverses in France and retreats, witness that from Mons to the Marne ; you cannot do that sort of thing in the East and retain prestige.

" Of our two divisions in Mesopotamia, mine, the 6th, is

* General Sir James Wolfe Murray.

complete; the 12th Division (Gorringe) has no guns! or divisional troops—and Nixon takes them from me and lends them to Gorringe when the latter has to go anywhere.

"I consider we ought to hold what we have got and not advance any more—as long as we are held up, as we undoubtedly are, in the Dardanelles. All these offensive operations in secondary theatres are dreadful errors in strategy: the Dardanelles, Egypt, Mesopotamia, East Africa! I wonder and wonder at such expeditions being permitted in violation of the greatest of all the great fundamental principles of war, especially that of Economy of Force. Such violation is always punished in history. Every soul should be *united in France*, where the fate of the nations will be decided, and also the fate of all these secondary theatres of the war. I am astounded at the Dardanelles business.

"It is all very well to talk of 1812, regarding the Russian retirement. Napoleon's former central position (1807) at Warsaw, at the confluence of the Narew, Bug, Ukra and Vistula, permits of the German minimum (or secondary) force in that position holding up twice its own numbers; and the Germans will destroy all bridges and railways over a vast region, and thus put all chances of a great Russian advance westward out of the question for a long time to come. It also means that over a million of men (the German Principal Mass on the Russian front) will go now to the Western Theatre to take the French and English by the collar—and I am convinced it will be the French south-eastern flank they will turn or envelop, as that flank is nearest the natural line of retreat of the Allies to their real base—the Loire.

"I think the situation is a very critical one—most grave, and the most comforting thought is that you are having breathing time, time to prepare for the storm . . . .

"I am afraid we are in the cold out here. The Mesopotamian operations are little noticed, though we are fighting the same enemy as you have in the Dardanelles, plus an appalling heat and consequent sick list (2,400 in hospital when I left Amarah, at the end of June). The hardships in France are nothing to that.

"I have received great praise out here and have established a record in the way of pursuits! I had few casualties in the battle because of the artillery and heavy-gun arrangements (4 inch, 5 inch and 4.7), which completely overwhelmed the enemy's guns, and their infantry could not therefore put up their heads . . . ."

As far as I could ascertain by talks with officials at Simla—including Foreign Department ones—the question of the occupation of Kut-al-Amara was still in the balance at the time I wrote that letter, but, in view of the strong representa-

tions made by General Nixon and the Government of India, there was very little doubt but that this operation would be sanctioned from home. I was informed by a very important Foreign Department official that he did not think there was any idea at the moment of an advance on Baghdad. He said, indeed, that unless the forces at our disposal were not more than adequate for the purpose, the Foreign Department would very strongly deprecate such a move. He added : " If things eventually go well in the main theatre of the war, Baghdad will be at our mercy to dispose of as as we will." It is a pity that the Government of India did not hold to that view.

On 10th August, I lunched with Sir Beauchamp Duff, the Commander-in-Chief, at his house, and had a long talk with him afterwards in his study.

He informed me that it had been decided that probably I should advance to Kut-al-Amara directly I got back to Amarah, *i.e.* an advance north of another 120 miles. Sir John Nixon had given strong reasons urging this step ; but sanction had not yet arrived from England.

I told the Commander-in-Chief that I could guarantee to defeat Nureddin, who was entrenched in a position covering Kut-al-Amara, and to throw him into the Tigris, but I hoped that with my present force, I should not be ordered to advance against Baghdad. It was not for me, I said, to point out to him the grave risks of continuing the strategic offensive with inadequate forces and with no troops on the Line of Communication behind me—a line between two and three hundred miles long. He fully agreed with me, and said with emphasis : " Not one inch, Townshend, shall you go beyond Kut-al-Amara unless I make you up to adequate strength."

I mentioned that I ought to have fully an army corps to take Baghdad and hold it. He complained that everyone was asking him for troops. He said he had not a single man to give, for at any time we might have Afghanistan and the Frontier on our backs. Persia also was causing trouble and might rise. These, I thought, were more reasons against an advance on Baghdad, but I did not make the remark.

" This news from Warsaw," he said, " is, politically speaking for us in India, most unfortunate. All the East begins to think that the Germans will win." He agreed with me that the *military* importance of the Russian retirement was nothing very serious ; it was the *political* importance which was doing such harm. Regarding the Persians he said, that, if they did rise, they were on our lines of communication and retreat. " You in Mesopotamia will have to deal with them. I have no one to spare from India."

He reminded me that he had sent 1,000 Territorials to fill up gaps in my division in Mesopotamia. The Chief seemed very much overworked and tired, and I advised him to take

week-ends in the hills beyond Simla with different air and rest. He replied that his work would accumulate too much if he did. "What I want," he said, "is a senior general in whom I have absolute confidence as regards loyalty and ability, who can be a sort of deputy Commander-in-Chief and carry on the work for me at times, while I have a short holiday." But he had no one answering to this description.

I left Simla on 13th August for Karachi, and found it very hot on the plains. I embarked on 16th August, on the *Dumra*, a fast Persian Gulf mail-boat, at Karachi, and sailed in the teeth of a monsoon gale.

On 20th August, we anchored off Bushire. Government had occupied that place with two battalions of Indian Infantry, under Brigadier-General Brooking. There had been fighting some 20 miles east of Bushire. British bluejackets from H.M.S. *Juno* and some Indian Infantry were landed. The Navy lost 9 killed and 17 wounded—including the commander of the *Juno* killed—whilst the Indian troops had 50 killed and wounded. The Arabs, they said, had retreated from the passes and palm groves attached.

Sailing from Bushire on the evening of the same day, I arrived at Basra on the 21st, and at once had a long talk with Sir John Nixon, at his house, regarding my advance from Amarah against Nureddin, at Kut-al-Amara.

The intelligence notes given me to read by Kemball, the M.G.G.S., showed me that Nureddin, in position astride the Tigris at Essinn, covering Kut-al-Amara, was making his right flank, on the right bank, very strong. Kemball thought that there must be some natural obstacle on the left bank covering Nureddin's left flank, of which we knew nothing. Sir John Nixon asked me to stay three or four days with him before proceeding to Amarah, so that we might talk everything over. He could not understand the delay in sanctioning the advance on Kut-al-Amara, and he told me that I should have my division complete for the advance on that place. I determined to get some line of communication troops out of him, in addition. The duties of the line of communication were then being carried out by the 12th Division.

Gorringe had taken Nasiriyeh on 24th July, after a stubborn resistance of a week or so on the part of the Turks, the bulk of whom retreated north along the Hai, and were said to have united with Nureddin's force at Kut-al-Amara. Nureddin, who had arrived at Baghdad from Constantinople with a good reputation as an up-to-date general, had entrenched himself in the position of Essinn, astride the Tigris, and some eight miles down stream (or east) of Kut-al-Amara, and in this position he was concentrating all the troops available. It was also repeatedly reported by agents of information at Essinn that the Turks were obstructing the river.

Nureddin had three divisions available :

35th Division at Kut ; this division had retreated from Nasiriyeh and was probably not much over 3,000 men.
37th Division (Reserve division from Baghdad), 4,000 to 5,000 men,
38th Division (Arab Troops), reduced to some 3,500 men.

Possible reinforcements in the near future were stated by our Intelligence Branch to be as follows :—

(*a*) 12 battalions of 500 men each (an Army Corps) from Van and Erzroum. They were reported in Mosul on August 9th and were expected to leave there for Baghdad on the 11th.

This force was reported as intending to leave in " killiks " or rafts. From local information, 200 men a day was a liberal estimate of the number that could be got off. Killiks take some time to make, for the wood has to be brought from the hills, and skins have to be tanned. A journey from Mosul to Baghdad was reckoned as at least a fortnight at that time of the year.

It would probably be more expeditious to march, in which case the road on the left bank (about 250 miles) would most likely be chosen, since, though longer than the right bank road, it was better off for supplies.

(*b*) The Turks had five battalions of 600 men each in Khanikin as a detachment of security for that flank. These were reported by an informer to be expected by the Turkish Commander at Kut. This report was unconfirmed both as regards numbers and intention to move ; we only knew that there was a force of some sort at Khanikin.

(*c*) There had been a further enlistment of Baghdadis and tribes. According to latest reports these " were not anxious to serve." But they would have to serve all the same, I thought.

The Turks were also busy fortifying a position at Ctesiphon, which was evidently to defend Baghdad if Nureddin were defeated at Essinn and had to retreat. The Turks were also reported to be ramping and bridging nullahs on the left bank of the Tigris, by the main road from Baghdad to Kut, with a view to the passage of guns.

Three steamers were reported at Kut, and two others were said to be working between Baghdad and Kut.

Nureddin had a mixed detachment of *couverture* pushed down river from Kut and Essinn, at Sheikh Saad.

On 23rd August, the M.G.G.S. handed me my general instructions ;—

General Head-Quarters,
I.E.F. "D,"
Basra.
23rd August, 1915.

1. Your mission is the destruction and dispersal of the enemy, who, according to the Intelligence already furnished you, are prepared to dispute your advance, and the occupation of Kut-al-Amara, thereby consolidating our control of the Basra Vilayet.*

2. The troops at your disposal for carrying out this mission are :—

6th Division :
7th Lancers.
Divisional Troops. { A maxim battery from the 12th Division when refitted.†
10th Brigade R.F.A.
Divisional Troops. { 1/5th Hants Howitzer battery.
86th Heavy battery R.G.A. 5-inch
104th " " " 4-inch { on barges.
less 1 section).
Two 15-pr. guns as post guns.
48th Pioneers.†
17th and 22nd Companies of Sappers and Miners.†
6th Divisional ammunition column.†
Four 4.7 guns on barges.
H.M. Naval armed Launches *Comet, Shaitan, Sumana.*
2 Aeroplanes at first, possibly 2 more later.
2 pack sets wireless, one of which should be kept installed on the steamer *Blosse Lynch.*
A wagon set at Amarah will be sent to Kut when that place is occupied.

3. As regards relations with the tribes on either side of the river, you will have the assistance of the Assistant Political Officer, Captain Leachman, who will keep you informed as to their attitude and the best measures for dealing with them.
It will be necessary to provide for the extension and security of the permanent telegraph line, which will be constructed as you advance.

4. A report is also required as to the number and location of entrenched posts for supplies, depots, etc., etc., on your line of communication between Amarah and Kut.
In the first instance these posts will have to be held by your troops.

* *i.e.*, province.
† All belonged to the 6th Division. They had been taken away previously to complete the 12th Division up the Karun.

Instructions as to scheme for defensible posts at Ali-al-Gharbi and Sheikh Saad have already been issued.* Steps should be taken to ensure that any material required for such posts should accompany your force, so as to avoid necessity of sending back to Amarah.

5. A scheme for the concentration of 2 brigades (less one battalion) at Sheikh Saad has already been drawn up, the details of which were fully discussed in conference on the 23rd August.† This scheme, after amendment as suggested at the Conference, may be acted on.
   For the further advance to Kut the detailed scheme will be prepared under your orders, and will include :—
   (*a*) Measures proposed for the attack on the Essinn position and occupation of Kut-al-Amara.
   (*b*) Instructions which it is proposed to give to flight-commander for aeroplane reconnaissance, bearing in mind the limited range to which the machines can operate compatible with safety and means of communication.
   For instance, no reconnaissance of Kut should be attempted until you have consolidated your position at Sheikh Saad, and flying base has been established there.
6. As soon as the occupation of Kut-al-Amara has been achieved you should get in touch with the leading sheikhs and establish a military Governor to initiate a civil administration.
7. "A wreck party," under Lieut. Slater, R.E., with divers and explosives, will be sent up to join your force in order to deal with the obstruction reported at Sinn—and any other work which may be necessary.

E. KEMBALL, M.G., G.S.

Thus, as in the advance on Amarah from Kurna, I was again given an independent command, including the drawing up of the plan of operations.

In order to facilitate and expedite the work of operation orders I decided to divide my force into the following Groups :—

"No. 1 Group."	16th Inf. Brigade.	
Brig. Gen.	Half 22nd Company Sappers and Miners.	
Delamain.	1 Section British Field Ambulance.	
	2 ,, Indian ,, ,,	*Green*
	1 Section 34th Signal Company.	*flag.*
"No. 2 Group."	17th Inf. Brigade.	
Brig. Gen.	Half 17th Company Sappers and Miners.	
Hoghton.	1 Section British Field Ambulance.	
	2 ,, Indian ,, ,,	*Red*
	1 Section 34th Signal Company.	*flag.*

* During my absence at Simla.

† This scheme for concentrating two brigades at Sheikh Saad had been drawn up during my absence. I did not agree with it, as such concentration was within striking distance of the enemy. Therefore I said nothing, but determined to disregard the scheme as soon as I reached Amarah.

"No. 3 Group." Maj. Gen. Fry.	18th Inf. Brigade. Half 22nd Company Sappers and Miners. 1 Section British Field Ambulance. 2 ,, Indian ,, ,, 1 Section 34th Signal Company.	*Yellow flag.*
"No. 4 Group." Brig. Gen. Smith, C.R.A.	Divisional Artillery. Half 17th Company Sappers and Miners. 34th Divisional Signal Company. Bridging Train. 48th Pioneers.	*Blue flag.*
"No. 5 Group." Senior R.A. Officer.	Divisional Ammunition Column. Field Ambulance and Hospital ship. Engineer stores and repairing boat.	*Blue and White flag.*
Divisional Supply Column.	(would always remain embarked in river transport).	*Blue with White Ball flag.*

When embarked in transports on the river the ships of the above-named groups flew the indicated group flag.

The S.N.O., Captain Mackenzie, R.N., would command the Naval Flotilla.

I was to proceed to Amarah on the *Julnar*, leaving Basra on 25th August, and I had a conversation with Sir John Nixon before going on board. I said I would send him my plan of operations from Amarah, and a wire when I was ready to advance on Sheikh Saad.

I told Sir John Nixon that if I routed the Turks in the battle, and stampeded them, as at Kurna, I might follow them into Baghdad. That is, if they were well on the run, and no opposition was offered, I was willing to take the responsibility of entering Baghdad. What Government did not want, I understood, was that we should enter Baghdad, and then have to retreat before superior numbers—if Turkish reinforcements were sent from Asia Minor to retake the place. My official instructions were clearly to destroy and disperse Nureddin's force and to occupy Kut-al-Amara. But, in order to destroy a force, one must pursue, and, if I found there was no one left in Baghdad, I might proceed there in the gun-boat flotilla—leaving the bulk of my force in the Ctesiphon position, and, taking a battalion with me, bring away the European women who were prisoners there.

Sir John Nixon told me to send him a wire if I intended a rush into Baghdad, as he might be able to come on in time to enter Baghdad with me.

Sir Percy Cox, the political officer, told me that if I went into Baghdad it would have almost the same political signifi-

cance and importance as if I were to enter Constantinople. The news would go through all Asia.*

The *Julnar* sailed at 2 p.m., with 1,000 British Territorial soldiers and reservists on board, to fill up the gaps of my British battalions in the 6th Division—the Norfolks, Dorsets, and Oxfords. By 7.30 a.m., on 28th August, I was ashore at Amarah, installed in my headquarters house, and going into my plans for the advance. All the artillery allotted to my force was arriving daily, I found.

I was not going to have anything to do with the scheme of concentrating two brigades of the division at Sheikh Saad, within striking distance of the enemy, which had been settled at a " conference " during my absence, and I at once wired to General Head-Quarters, saying that to save time I should concentrate the whole of my division at Ali-al-Gharbi, where it was not within striking distance of the enemy, and should then, with my force united, advance on Sheikh Saad by route march—" as will be seen in the plan of operations I am shortly sending you."

Lt. Cowley, R.N.V.R.† in command of the *Mejidieh*, assured me that no P-class steamer could proceed more than fifteen miles beyond Ali-al-Gharbi in the present state of the river. As Cowley had commanded the *Mejidieh*, one of the Lynch Company steamers between Basra and Baghdad, for many years, I wired this to G.H.Q., and asked for a complete list of ships and barges available. I found that I had 500 combatants of the 6th Division in hospital at Amarah ; that I had 105 days' supplies in hand at Amarah for British troops and 129 for Indian Troops, and about 127 days' grain for horses and mules. On leaving Amarah for Simla I had ordered the active purchase of local supplies by Annesley, so as to be independent of the Government supplies ; and I found we had local supplies 30,000 maunds‡ of bhoosa ; barley, 40,000 maunds ; grass, 9,000 maunds ; rice, 3,000 maunds ; onions, 927 maunds ; fuel, 1,156 maunds. I had roughly six months' forage in hand and a similar quantity of barley.§

On the afternoon of 28th August I drew up my plan or project of operations—for which, with some remarks, see the Appendix to Part II. It was the same as the so-called German system of attack, which is merely a copy of Napoleon's favourite manœuvre when on the offensive, either in strategy or in higher tactics, and is of the same value to-day as it was a hundred years ago, for the great fundamental principles of strategy never alter. This system, as I have shown in the Introduction, was adopted by Moltke, who was the greatest pupil Napoleon

* Copied out of my diary under heading 25th August, 1915.

† Afterwards killed on the *Julnar* in his attempt to run the blockade and reach me at Kut with provisions.

‡ A maund—88 lbs. avoirdupois. 30,000 Maunds—1,183 tons English weight.

§ It will be seen what a wise order this was, when I had to defend Kut. It was on these supplies that I held out.

ever had, and who declared that " the art of a general-in-chief consists in containing the front of an enemy with a part of his force, whilst he uses his principal effort against the enemy's flank." This was the doctrine of the German General Staff, just as it was Napoleon's a hundred years ago. It gave Moltke his brilliant success over the Austrians in 1866 and the French in 1870, and has been continued by the German General Staff—and also by the French General Staff, taught by the experience of 1870. It is the embodiment of the fundamental principle of the Mass—to strike the enemy's weakest point with the greatest possible numbers. This principle must preside at all combinations in strategy and higher tactics, if those combinations are to be good.

A careful study of Napoleon's campaigns will show that the Napoleonic system consists in bringing to bear the Principal Mass of your force—be it in a theatre of war, strategically speaking—or on the field of battle, tactically speaking—on the enemy's weakest point, which must of necessity be one of his two flanks or his centre. Napoleon gave us, in his victories, twenty-seven examples of the turning manœuvre with his principal mass against the enemy's flank and rear—that is to say, that flank which lay nearest the enemy's natural line of retreat, which is, of course, his line of communications ; and he gave us two examples only of finding the enemy's weakest point to be the centre.

All the great decisive battles of the 19th and beginning of the 20th Centuries have been gained by the turning or enveloping manœuvre, which is simple and suitable for great masses of troops. Königgrätz, Gravelotte, Sedan and Mukden are examples. The only occasion in which we are likely to see penetration succeed will be in a battle between moving armies, i.e., in a great encounter battle—when one army marching united and in parallel columns close to each other, bumps into another marching in columns widely distributed over a very wide extent of front on the system of the Germans.

If the campaigns of Napoleon, Frederick the Great, and Moltke are attentively studied, the secret of using the Principal Mass against the enemy's weakest point will be at once apparent in the strategy and tactics of all three.

In these days the attack against the enemy's centre has little or no chance of success from a tactical point of view, unless you have enormous gun power, for the increased efficiency of the defence renders penetration of the centre more and more difficult, and reduces the chance of success of such an attack, whilst failure may result in the attacking force being itself enveloped and destroyed. The enveloping or turning attack is more and more necessary to-day.

Our own Field Service Regulations (Part I, Operations, 1909, reprint 1914, section 102) clearly recognise this fact :

" It will usually be wiser to direct the decisive effort against one of the enemy's flanks, the choice of objective being made either before or after deployment, according to circumstances. The development of fire effect is usually facilitated when the plan of battle has for its object the envelopment of one or both of the enemy's flanks." In late years I have often noticed the advocacy amongst senior officers of the envelopment of both flanks of the adversary. This is only permissible if you are in overwhelming superiority in numbers to the enemy, as Napoleon was to Mack at Ulm, or Moltke to MacMahon at Sedan. Otherwise to envelop by both flanks is a weakness and a violation of the principle of Economy of Force. Napoleon gives us only one example of the envelopment of both flanks of the enemy—Ulm. I remember that after a lecture I had given at home, in 1913, one of our leading generals said to me: " But Wellington enveloped both flanks of the French at Vittoria." I replied: " One could take any liberties against so incompetent a commander as King Joseph. Wellington would not have tried that against Napoleon—or Massèna or Marmont." But, as a matter of fact, Wellington delivered an absolutely frontal attack at the battle of Vittoria; it was certainly not an envelopment or a turning attack.

There are great risks, it is often said, in the turning manœuvre, which is why the cautious Moltke preferred not to follow Napoleon's favourite turning attack, but chose rather the less dangerous envelopment, or overlapping, of the enemy's flank. This gives mediocre results as compared with the great consequences of a turning manœuvre. " He who fears risks," said Napoleon *à propos* of its risks, " should not play cards."

If the gap between the turning attack and the other part of the force is too dangerously wide, one can put an intermediate force into the gap, as was Napoleon's custom. For instance, Bernadotte's corps was placed in the gap between Napoleon's force and Davoust's corps, which performed the turning manœuvre at Jena. Davoust was some fourteen miles from Napoleon's force

This gap in a small force acting independently, in the case, say, of a division, or an army corps, is governed on principle by the effective range of field artillery—about 5,000 yards, or three miles. In the case of an army, heavy artillery range would govern the distance of this gap. In the case of a group of armies, where one army constitutes the minimum force making the frontal containing attack, whilst the other two armies play the *rôle* of the principal mass in performing the turning manœuvre, one would regulate this gap to one, or at the most two short marches, according to circumstances and the degree of training, discipline, and prestige of your opponent. In studying Napoleon's campaigns it is most instructive to see how, when circumstances interfered with the turning manœuvre,

he improvised measures and movements in order to carry out his original manœuvre and intentions.*

The Germans simply followed Napoleon ; but the majority of French Generals have in late years favoured the principle of the mass applied to the enemy's centre, the attack called the *percement*. Strange to say, many believed in it, and I found, when I was military *attaché* in Paris in 1905, that it was generally believed by the Ecole de Guerre to be Napoleon's favourite manœuvre ! Of course, this was nonsense. Napoleon gave only two examples of the attack on the centre—Austerlitz and Ratisbon ; all his other great victories were the turning attack against the hostile flank and rear or the envelopment.†

Not only did the French Generals as a whole favour the attack against the centre, but their manœuvres, generally speaking, were not predetermined ; they waited until the battle had begun in order to discover where the enemy's weakest point lay, and they evinced a great tendency to discover that weak point in the enemy's centre. This method leads to much vacillation and hesitation—in addition to which the enormous battle-fronts of to-day preclude all impromptu manœuvring. When your manœuvre is predetermined, you know your own mind, and you are determined to carry it through, in spite of anything the enemy may do to stop you. Your different groups or columns march on their objectives without hesitation, and you know that the wing of the enemy on which you are going to throw your Principal Mass must be overlooked ; you know that to nibble at or lay your hands on some particular locality is not of the least use—it will only give time to the enemy to retire comfortably to a new position.

But to continue after my long digression (the object of which is to show the military student why my manœuvre was predetermined). What could the enemy do to upset my predetermined manœuvre ? I find jotted down in my pocket-book of that time the different contingencies which might arise in this operation. where the primary objective was to defeat Nureddin in the Essinn position and to occupy Kut-al-Amara:—

(*a*) " Nureddin, who has two weak divisions, will in all probability be reinforced by a division from Mosul before I can attack him. There are plenty of rumours that Turkish troops have arrived in Baghdad from Mosul. In this case his force will probably be equal to mine. The gun power will be in my favour, but Nureddin's position is reported to be of great strength (and so it proved).

(*b*) " Nureddin may possibly retire on my approach and fall back to occupy the position at Ctesiphon in order to defend Baghdad ; but this is not probable, if only for the reason

* *c.f.* Napoleon at the battles of Bautzen, Wagram and Austerlitz.

† Borodino is an example of Napoleon's executing an enveloping manœuvre when attacking an adversary whose numbers are approximate to his own. The battle of Lützen is another example, but this was a battle of encounter.

that he is labouring night and day on the defensive position at Essinn."

Owing to the lack of sufficient transport, it was impossible to carry out the fundamental principle of Rapidity, which is part and parcel of the principle that the offensive alone conducts to victory. With Rapidity one might add Surprise. By reason of our being so undermanned as regards land and water transport, great delays took place after each forward bound we made in the advance up the Tigris.

If Nureddin retired at my approach—and my aerial service would give me instant information—I decided to push ahead with B Column (18th Brigade and a proportion of guns) on the ships of the Naval Flotilla—for I had not enough ships to transport more than a brigade at a time—and to endeavour to overtake a part of his force, say his rearguard, and destroy it. But if I could not manage to overtake him I should return to Kut and consolidate my position there, as the orders from India were not to advance beyond that point.

(*c*) " Nureddin may receive heavy reinforcements, and feel himself strong enough to advance against me and fight a battle of encounter. In this case I shall deliver a defensive-offensive battle."

The Napoleonic system for fighting such a battle follows the same principles (of Economy of Force and of the Mass) as are applied to a purely offensive battle. The Minimum Force, however, rests on the passive defensive on the main avenue of approach of the bulk of the hostile force, solidly entrenched behind some obstacle, if possible. Its position is also strengthened with all the art of the engineer—field works, fortified villages, etc. These should form as a rule a curtain in front of the defensive position in the shape of advanced posts. The bulk of the artillery should also be attached to the minimum force to increase its defensive power.

The Principal Mass, with the bulk of the cavalry working on its exterior flank, I should use just as in an offensive battle, previously concealing it on that flank which lies nearest to my natural line of retreat or line of communication, so that I can use it offensively against the enemy's Principal Mass, enveloping attack, or offensive wing of manœuvre ; for, if my adversary has any knowledge of tactics whatever, he would assuredly envelop that flank of mine which lies nearest my natural line of retreat. In a case like mine, where I always had one flank resting on the Tigris, there was no doubt as to which flank the enemy would envelop if on the offensive—it would always be the desert flank.

As soon as the heads of the hostile columns advancing against the Minimum Force became engaged I should on principle launch my Principal Mass against the enemy's flank. This manœuvre is the antidote to the German enveloping attack.

Even if it happened that the enemy's offensive wing of manœuvre enveloped the flank opposite to that of our natural line of retreat, it did not much matter, for the advance alone of the columns of our Principal Mass against the flank of the attacker would at once paralyse all movement on his part, and would cause the utmost consternation and hesitation, and probably flight. It will be seen in this book that I applied this system practically in the rear guard battle at Umm-al-Tubul, on 1st December, 1915, when the Turks overtook me and I was compelled suddenly to fight a defensive battle. I adopted the dispositions which I have described, using my brigade of mounted troops and horse artillery to deliver a counter-attack on the flank of the attackers, and supporting this attack with the whole of my artillery. The enemy halted, hesitated, and retreated, and I was thus enabled to break off action and resume my retreat in good order.

Surprise is, of course, more difficult in these days owing to that new agent of reconnaissance, the aeroplane; but with small forces—up to 40,000 or 50,000 men—night marches should give you the necessary surprise. Even when dealing with groups of armies it is much more possible than most people imagine. What of the strategic turning move of the Principal Mass of the German armies through Belgium into France in 1914, while their Minimum Force fortified and entrenched itself in Alsace-Lorraine?

It will be seen that Sir John Nixon was unable to give me sufficient land transport for my whole force. I found, on going into my ways and means, that Column B, in particular, was practically without land transport.

It is difficult to exaggerate the danger of the cutting down of land transport of an expeditionary force. Here was one of my three infantry brigades tied, as it were, to the river bank and unable to manœuvre away from the river and the ships, for lack of transport, for a greater distance than three or four miles. It reminded me of Wellington's letter of protest to Lord Castlereagh in 1808, when the British Expedition, rather smaller than the force I was in command of, landed in Portugal, at Mondego Bay, with the mission of assisting the Portuguese people to eject the French from that country. "This department," wrote Wellington, "deserves your serious attention. The existence of the army depends on it, and yet the people who manage it are incapable of managing anything outside a counting-house. I shall be obliged to leave Spencer's guns behind for want of means of moving them, and I should have been obliged to have left my own behind also, were it not for the horses of the Irish commissariat. Let nobody ever prevail upon you to send a force to any part of Europe without horses to draw their guns."

The habit of sending British expeditions overseas with no

transport was almost universal in the Seven Years' War and long before that—and from the Peninsular War even up to the present day. I think the reason may be found in the fact that British Expeditions have been mostly amphibious; some island in the West Indies was to be captured or some town on the coast of North or South America to be attacked and burnt. No marches inland, and no manœuvring were required. The fleet with the troops arrived off the coast. A landing was effected, or they were chased off the beach as soon as they landed; or the town was rushed, the harbour captured, and the local port taken by assault. If the assault was a failure then everyone hastily scrambled on board ship again, the general and admiral each accused the other of hesitation or what not, and off they sailed on another raid against some other unsuspecting settlement—it might be Porto Rico, Havana, Buenos Aires. But in all military history the spending department of Government has been run, generally speaking, by men who were determined to gain merit by parsimony—possibly having no other merit to plead—forgetting that real economy is only to be found in efficiency of means. I suppose that this war, as regards the principal theatre of it in France, is the first in British military history in which transport has not been cut down—in short, in which money has been spent lavishly.

My Divisional Headquarter Staff had been altered, or, rather, shuffled, since the Kurna-Amarah operation. Colonel Gamble, my G.S.O., I, had been promoted, on my recommendation, to Brigadier-General. In his place I had Colonel Evans, R.E.* As G.S.O., II, I now had Captain Peel of the Indian Army, who had been G.S.O., III, in the Kurna-Amarah operation. Captain Morland of the Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry became my G.S.O., III. Major Davie, Indian Army, was still in his place as D.A.A.G., and Lieutenant-Colonel Chitty of the Indian Army was, as in the Kurna-Amarah operation, my Assistant Quartermaster-General. Instead of Stapleton, of the Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry, who had been my D.A.A. and Q.M.G., and had been invalided for typhoid fever, I now had Major Gilchrist, Indian Army, who came to me from the 18th Brigade, where he had been Staff Captain,

Colonel Annesley, of the Supply and Transport, was still Assistant Director of Supplies, as he had been in the Kurna-Amarah operations. Colonel Hehir, Indian Medical Service, still remained as Assistant Director of Medical Services, with Major Brown Mason, R.A.M.C., as his assistant. Captain Begg, R.A., was my Ordnance Officer. Major Forbes, Supply and Transport Corps, was the Assistant Director of Transport.

To arrange for the march of a force is a staff duty of the highest importance; but to arrange for the combined advance

* He had been my Divisional Engineer Commander up to this time.

of a force, part by route-march and part by river-transport, was a staff duty of a still higher importance. I have already shown that both river and land transport were insufficient. It was the old story of making bricks without straw. The peculiarly unhealthy climate rendered the medical arrangements and organisation of marked importance, and the attack on the Turkish force, under a general with Nureddin's reputation, entrenched in a stronger position, promised a considerable butcher's bill. In Colonel Hehir I had the best and most experienced medical advice. He had sound opinions, did not dream of trying to convert the fighting force into a train of stretcher carriers, and yet took all possible advantage of the carts of the Supply and Transport Corps to add to field ambulance arrangements. But the impossible could not be thought of. Iced champagne in the middle of the Mesopotamian desert would be without doubt an admirable medicine, but if you tried to provide for your sick and wounded during a desert campaign as you did in the North of France, it would have been impossible to have moved the expedition beyond Basra or Kurna. As Sir John Nixon told me, when I asked for more troops in my advance from Amarah with which to take Kut : " You must cut your suit according to your cloth."

Having fixed upon the manner in which my little army was to be fed, the nature and amount of the ration to be given to man and beast, the extent to which my means provided carriage for sick and wounded, the supply and quantity of ammunition for man and gun, I came to the most important detail—the organisation of my 13,000 combatants, and the project or plan of operations with which I should defeat the enemy, and, if possible, destroy him. This higher tactical and strategical work I took on myself as my own particular province, and the General Staff put my orders and decisions into operation orders ; but the success of my operations depended on the manner in which my A.Q.M.G. and his assistant, my Assistant Director of Supplies and Assistant Director of Medical Services, did their work, almost as much as it did on my tactics and strategy. The work this staff did in enabling me to advance to Kut-al-Amara, thence nearly to Baghdad, and then to hold out for five months at Kut, some 390 miles from Basra and the sea, speaks for itself. I can give it no higher praise than to point to what it accomplished.

My Brigadier-Generals were as follows :—

Brigadier-General Delamain, C.B., D.S.O., Indian Army.	16th Inf. Brigade.
Brigadier-General Hoghton* ..	17th Inf. Brigade.

* He had replaced Colonel Gamble of the British service, whom I had been allowed to promote from G.S.O., I., to command the 17th Infantry Brigade, and had been invalided sick during my absence from Amarah.

Major-General Fry, C.B., Indian Army	18th Inf. Brigade.
Brig.-Genl. Smith, R.A., Commanding Artillery, 6th Division.	

Divisional-Engineer Commander, Major Winsloe, R.E., was the same as in the Kurna-Amarah operations.

The commanding officers of Units in the Sixth Division were as follows :—

16th Brigade.	
2nd Dorset Regiment ..	Major F. W. Radcliffe.
20th Punjabis	Major R. S. St. John.
104th Wellesley's Rifles	Lt. Col. C. B. L. Clery.
117th Maharattas ..	Lt. Col. H. K. MacGeorge.
17th Brigade.	
1st Oxford & Bucks Light Infantry	Lt. Col. E. A. E. Lethbridge, D.S.O.
22nd Punjabis	Lt. Col. T. G. Blois-Johnson.
103rd Maharatta Light Infantry	Lt. Col. W. H. Brown.
119th Infantry ..	Lt. Col. J. R. Darley.
18th Brigade.	
2nd Norfolk Regiment	Major F. C. Lodge.
7th Rajputs	Lt. Col. H. O. Parr.
119th Maharatta Light Infantry	Lt. Col. G. S. Frazer.
120th Rajputana Infantry	Lt. Col. E. Codrington.
10th Brigade R.F.A.	Lt. Col. E. S. Cleeve.
63rd Battery	Major H. B. Smith.
76th	Lt. Col. T. Nevinson.
82nd	Major H. N. St. J. Maule.
7th Hariana Lancers ..	Major G. P. O. Carnegy.
16th Cavalry	Major C. D. Mears, M.V.O.

I made every effort to fill up the ranks of the units on the principle of Economy of Force. For example, on arrival at Amarah, I at once made a raid in the convalescent depot there. Establishments of this nature are much open to abuse, and are, unless sharply looked after, much sought after by skulkers. They should be under the command of a military officer of standing, who should be carefully selected for this duty—stern and determined, but just—and the G.O.C. should frequently inspect these places. On 5th September I found there were three or four hundred soldiers—sufficient to turn the scale of a battle—well enough to rejoin their battalions at once ; the

remainder, too weakly to rejoin, but well enough to handle a rifle, were put on garrison duty at Amarah, where they would have nothing to do. The troops at Amarah had been exercised in using hand grenades, and the aircraft had been practised in aeroplane observation for artillery fire.

I also issued instructions to all commanders of units and heads of departments to make every possible effort to economise men. "Every man employed on the line of communications means one less rifle in the ranks." For the garrisons of any posts I might have to make on the communications, I announced that I should use convalescents.* All these would be at a minimum strength, and skilful use of ground and field fortification must needs make amends for their size.

I was definitely allotted by G.H.Q. at Basra eleven steamers, including two tugs, and twenty-three barges and lighters. Of the latter only five were decked for animals, and they also included two coal and oil barges and gun barges. One of the steamers was fitted up as a hospital ship. This was the *Mosul*, the Turkish steamer I had captured in the pursuit from Kurna to Amarah. Major Winsloe, R.E., had also six mahelas or Arab dhows with stores as follows :—

1st Mahela—jetties for landing troops.
2nd Mahela—material for defensive posts on line of communication.
3rd Mahela—material for defensive positions, or installation of troops in a camp.
4th Mahela—explosives.
5th Mahela } —bridge train gear.
6th Mahela }

Wheatley bags had been distributed to the different battalions for carrying water if necessary, and for making rafts—and as much rope as could be spared.

I had 330 transports, carts and 740 animals with the Sixth Division, and I made every effort to get more in order to enable my Principal Mass to manœuvre on a wide turning manœuvre in the desert ; I asked Headquarters to buy camels for this purpose, but the few I got were as wild as hawks and could not be trained for loading. This astonished me after my experiences in the Nile expeditions of 1885 and 1896-98.

Now that I was ordered to take the offensive on a large scale, it was indicated that a far higher standard of preparation, as regards numbers, equipment, and land and sea transport was demanded. In short, all the elements demanded by the strategic offensive were lacking. There was an insufficiency of the numbers required by the offensive, which demands great superiority in numbers ; no copious stream of reinforcements, munitions, and supplies followed up the striking force ; and

* Always a custom with Napoleon. One meets with repeated orders on this subject in his military correspondence.

the essential principle of rapidity, which must be added to the offensive, was out of the question, owing to the lack of transport —to say nothing of the great length of our communications, which ran through a hostile country. Military history proves to us that the boldest and best plans in war, when the strategic offensive is adopted, lead to ultimate failure if the available resources do not hold out until we have successfully gained the final objective. This we see by the examples of Hannibal, Charles XII of Sweden, and Napoleon in 1812 ; while a further instance is the failure of the German General Staff in 1914 to calculate the proper numbers and resources required to throw the armies of France in the dust, and then to take France and overcome the remaining resistance in the country. In a secondary theatre, the principle of Economy of Force demands that the force allotted shall be of minimum strength and consequently on the defensive.

I repeat my opinion that having taken Amarah and Nasiriyeh, we should have consolidated our position in the Basra Province on the lines suggested by me earlier in this book— with minimum forces entrenched strongly at Amarah, Nasiriyeh, Ahwaz, and the Principal Mass fortified at the Central Place of Basra, with adequate water transport to facilitate the rapid union of the Principal Mass with any threatened minimum force. Only in the event of the success of the Allies at Gallipoli or in France, the Principal Theatre, should the strategic offensive have been taken in Mesopotamia.

I received a telegram from the M.G.G.S., dated 29th August, asking me, in the event of circumstances imposing the necessity of a pursuit to Baghdad after the fight at Essinn, how I proposed to carry it out. I replied that I should carry out a pursuit with the Naval Flotilla, as I did after the battle of Kurna, endeavouring to hold up and drive off the river retreating detachments of the enemy, my division, under command of the next senior general, following up by route march. I might instal my force in the Ctesiphon (or Salman Pak) position* whilst I went into Baghdad with the flotilla to reconnoitre, act according to circumstances, and to rescue the European women prisoners there ; I should take perhaps a battalion and machine guns with me on the flotilla.

I asked M.G.G.S. to reduce the post at Kila Salih, south of Amarah, from a battalion to a company. This garrison was formed by the 7th Gurkhas, belonging to the 12th Division, who, I suggested, might garrison Amarah on my advance, and I assumed that my line of communications between that place and Kut would be under my command until my operations were concluded.

I had not yet got the 18th Infantry Brigade (less the Norfolks, who were at Amarah with me) up at Amarah. So I wrote

* This would menace the unfortified city of Baghdad.

privately to Sir John Nixon, on 31st August, that I wished to have this brigade united to the rest of my division as soon as possible. There was a possibility of Nureddin falling back on Ctesiphon and not standing at Essinn, in which case I should ask permission to follow him up and attack him at Ctesiphon. I told him that I was always impressing officers with the vital necessity of the principle of Economy of Force in the question of dissemination of troops along the line of communications; that every superfluous man there meant the loss of a rifle in the battle which was to decide the fate of the whole country. I was cutting down the garrison of each post to a minimum. All that was required in that way was a closed work with or without a post gun, overhead cover, enfilade and reverse fire protection, a clear field of fire, automatic alarms, and 500 rounds per rifle, with food for three months and water in the post itself. In this country a platoon, I thought, ought to be enough to garrison a post on the Line of Communication.

I had turned Amarah into a second Rawal Pindi as regards training of troops, which were all over the great plain on the right bank of the river. I had inspected the 17th Brigade in an attack that morning and was very pleased with what I saw.

I was ready to start, I said, as soon as the ships arrived from Basra. The heat at Amarah was 110°–117°! The days were as hot as ever, but the nights were cool and the sick rate was going down rapidly now that the troops understood they were to advance very soon for a battle.

On the same date, 31st August, I wired to the M.G.G.S., that, as my whole force would march when I advanced from Sheikh Saad and as I intended to carry out a turning move for the battle, I must have my complete first line divisional transport, and also second line transport for regimental reserve ammunition and one day's rations. That was a minimum requirement, to render my force sufficiently mobile and self-contained. I required 450 pack and 300 draught mules and 150 carts, in addition to those I had already.

I sanctioned Colonel Annesley in bringing up 300 Arab coolies to unload rations from the barges. In the great heat I must spare the fighting troops, who would find marching very trying.

The result of my representations about disseminating strength on the line of communications was that the line from Amarah to Kut was handed over to the 12th Division, so that my force should be united for the battle.

It was arranged, with regard to my food supplies going forward, that the 1st Echelon should take ten days' supplies for the whole force, the 2nd Echelon 20 days', and the 3rd Echelon 30 days' supplies.

On 1st September I put in orders the "grouping" of my

division, as shown earlier, in order to facilitate and expedite the circulation of operation orders, quartering the troops, etc. I told Colonel Hehir, A.D.M.S., that he must allow for six per cent. casualties and that we should require one medical officer to every forty sick or wounded.

I had 600 rounds per gun for the 10th Brigade R.F.A., 300 rounds per gun for the 4-inch and 5-inch guns and the howitzers, and 300 rounds per rifle for the infantry ; my force mustered about 10,275 combatants, with 30 guns. I exclude the Hants Territorial Battalion, which was to remain at Amarah.

Eleven steamers and twenty-five barges had arrived, and so I began to move troops to Ali-al-Gharbi on September 1st, for the forward concentration of my force. G.H.Q. asked me to note that matters would be delayed for a fortnight owing to my demands for transport. Since I had only asked for the bed-rock minimum to fight with on land, I wondered if G.H.Q. desired me to win the battle by remaining on board ship !

As in the Kurna-Amarah operation I was ordered to plan and perform a difficult and delicate operation, and had utterly inadequate means with which to carry it out. I find in my diary of 2nd September comments on this. " There is no knowing what I may *not* have to do in this advance on Kut. I know that if I were in the place of Nureddin, the British commander would find me in a strong position, seven or eight miles *inland* from the river, knowing by my spies that the British had little transport other than ships and barges. In other words, I should take up a strategic flanking position to the river line of advance. I shall now have to extemporise a donkey corps if I can."

Smarting over the transport business, I wrote the following private letter, on 2nd September, to Sir John Nixon, at Basra :—

" I feel very hurt at being told I am to base my plans on the river and land transport allotted to me. See the wire Kemball has sent me this morning. I have cut down units to the *minimum*, and I have more troops under my command than Lord Wolseley had in the Nile Expedition of 1885. You have given me a most serious and important operation to carry out—the most important and serious one that I know of in the last 30 years. . . . Who can tell what manœuvre I may not have to make ? There is a possibility of my entering Baghdad. and *perhaps not by river*.* I may find Nureddin taking up a flanking position to the river line of advance, some miles inland—since he must know by his intelligence that we have little transport apart from our ships. This is what you would find me doing if you changed me for Nureddin, and a nice time I would give your general in consequence.

* By which I meant that I might have to make a long march or marches inland away from the river.

"As for the M.G.G.S. saying I have delayed operations a fortnight by my demands for transport! I must suppose he is not serious. . . . I hope to be able to pursue if I have mule transport, and I am now going to improvise a donkey or coolie corps in place of the mules short of the numbers I asked for. I am concentrating my force forward on Ali-al-Gharbi now. Delamain constitutes my covering detachments. He is on the right bank at Ali-al-Gharbi, so I am concentrating the division on that bank. The hostile mixed detachment at Sheikh Saad is also on the right bank.* We shall march by this bank to Sheikh Saad, after which I shall cross to the left. Remember, there was no pursuit after the battle of Shaiba because of the lack of transport; there was no pursuit after the Nasiriyeh fight for the same reason, I am told, and in consequence the 2,000 Turkish fugitives from Nasiriyeh are now added to Nureddin's force at Essinn."

On September 3rd there was a cavalry skirmish some nine miles north of Ali-al-Gharbi, between a squadron of 7th Indian Lancers, doing escort to the telegraph repairing party, and about two hundred Turkish cavalry. The 22nd Punjabis were sent out by Delamain in support of the Cavalry, but found that the Turkish cavalry had retired.

As I wanted to be able to fight the two 4-inch guns and at least two of the five-inch guns on land, since they would make an addition to my fighting force, I wired on September 3rd to M.G.G.S. for forty pairs of bullocks and five ammunition carts in addition, Twenty-five of these bullocks were at Kurna, sixteen I had at Amarah, and I asked him to send up the balance of thirty-nine, which were at Basra. The last echelon of steamers going back from Ali-al-Gharbi to Amarah for supplies brought up the bullocks as I requested.

I received a wire on 2nd September, informing me that the 30th Brigade of the 12th Division had been allotted for my line of communications between Amarah and Kut-al-Amara, as follows:—

At Amarah—Headquarters 30th Brigade.	
	1/4th Hants.
	Wing of 24th Punjabis.
At Ali-al-Gharbi.	Wing 24th Punjabis.
At Kut-al-Amara.	76th Punjabis,
	2/7th Gurkhas.

In accordance with my recommendation, Kilat Salih had now been abandoned.

I see in my diary that I hoped to be able to deliver battle on 23rd September, reckoning that I could advance from Ali-al-Gharbi on 21st September. I should have some forty days' food in hand from the day of the battle.

I wired to Brigadier-General Delamain, at Ali-al-Gharbi,

* I also intended to try to make Nureddin Pacha think I was going to attack by the right bank.

on 3rd September, asking him to purchase as many local supplies as possible and to collect local transport if he could, as G.H.Q. were starving me as regards mules. I was 300 short of the number I wanted. Delamain wired that he could get 100 camels and 100 bullocks and donkeys (this would be equal to the 300 mules I was short of), and that he was getting barley and bhoosa. He also told me that local information regarding the left bank of the Tigris about Essinn was to the effect that the marsh indicated on the degree sheets was correct, and that it was some 18 inches deep on the right bank. On the left bank the marsh indicated in the map was said to be drying up, but it seemed doubtful if it would be fit for heavy guns. There was only a mile of dry ground between the river and the marsh.

However, I felt confident that this marsh would not prevent my predetermined turning movement, for I never contemplated taking heavy guns on this manœuvre. The divisional artillery, including the heavy guns, would be on the river bank supporting my minimum force and engaged in the frontal attack on the adversary's position.

As regards my information of Nureddin and his force: Intelligence reports up to 23rd August put him down at 7,000 to 8,000 combatants, plus 3,000 Arab horsemen. 18 guns were in position at Essinn. He had been entrenching since early in June, and railway material (plates, sleepers, etc.) and timber, had been brought from Baghdad to strengthen his field fortifications. It was reported that there was an obstruction in the river between the two lines of entrenchments on each side of the river. It was believed to consist of two mahelas and eight barges, all connected by chains and filled with bricks and sand. The obstruction was in the navigable channel—the Tigris at Essinn being about half the width of the Shatt-el-Arab at Basra.

On the right bank there were three lines of trenches, one behind the other, with transverse trenches, etc. On the left bank there was only one line of entrenchments and the flank was open to the desert.*

The country was open and, generally speaking, unobstructed, usually heavy going up to July. The enemy had a boat-bridge connecting the two banks, situated well to the rear of the entrenched position and beyond range of our artillery fire.

The enemy was reported to be entrenching and fortifying a position at Salman Pak or Ctesiphon, where there were 500 troops. It was also stated that 15 guns were at Baghdad, which were destined for the armament of Kut.

There were rumours of reinforcements on the way, from

* But the enemy were busy digging all day and every day, and Turks dig like moles and with the utmost rapidity. The position on the left bank was quite strong on the day of the battle.

Constantinople and Aleppo. 2,000 Anatolian troops and one Aleppo battalion arrived in June; and it was reported that Djemal Pacha would bring his two army corps from Syria to Baghdad.

Nureddin had six river steamers and three motor-launches.

From Kut to Azizieh there was a good desert road, and from Azizieh to Baghdad a carriage road.

On 6th September I wrote to Sir John Nixon a private letter as follows :—

"It seems to me that Nureddin has been reinforced and has more guns—but I shall not know the truth till my aircraft make their reconnaissance of the enemy's position.

"I think *personally* that Nureddin Pacha is either weak in numbers, and so not strong enough to advance, or is utterly ignorant of the art of war. I will tell you why. Delamain's brigade should never have been sent up to Ali-al-Gharbi *en l'air*, so much nearer to the enemy than to his own division! *

"Had I been in Nureddin's place I would have wiped out Delamain. The principle for covering service is two short marches, or one march—on rivers available for steamers, say twenty miles at the most. When I returned and found this arrangement I was not happy till I had united the 17th Brigade to Delamain's. Disasters occur by tactical errors of this sort. I'll take risks with any man where it is *necessary* to do so, but you would never find me making tactical errors like that. I take no risks in that way.

"I am afraid my advance will seem slow to you, but it cannot be avoided, when I have to battledore and shuttlecock my transport about to fetch up troops and stores in homœopathic doses. I don't suppose Nureddin has 30 guns—if he has, we shall have a tabasco time! I reckon he has 18 guns, but I notice that every day brings reports of increases in his strength. When I do get within punching range of Nureddin you can rely on my taking him by the collar."

Sixty-seven more rifles were added to my force by Hehir's medical inspection of convalescent British N.C.O.'s and men at Amarah on 8th September; and a hundred and ten Indian soldiers also came in for the same reason.

Having seen the bulk of my force off on its way to Ali-al-Gharbi, where it was to be concentrated by echelons of brigades in ships, I followed on 10th September, with my divisional staff on board the *Mejidieh*, commanded by Lieut. Cowley, R.N.R. We reached Ali-al-Gharbi on 11th September at 11 a.m. Delamain informed me that the hostile mixed detachment at Gunfad had fallen back.

I had now united practically the whole of my force at Ali al-Gharbi, only the 63rd Battery, R.F.A., and the howitzer battery remained at Amarah to be brought on by steamers and

* This was done when I had gone away to Simla at the end of June, 1915.

barges, to unite with the force at Sheikh Saad. I had present at Ali-al-Gharbi some 11,000 combatants and 30 guns, excluding the half 30th Brigade of the 12th Division, which, though allotted to the line of communication, I intended to use in my battle, and exclusive also of the two batteries mentioned above still to join me from Amarah.

The troops at my disposal for the coming battle were as follows :—

6th Division (16th, 17th and 18th Brigades) reinforced later by half the 30th Brigade, under Lt. Col. Climo, D.S.O.

The following Divisional Troops :—

7th Lancers (and 16th Cavalry later).
A Maxim battery from 12th Division.
10th Brigade, R.F.A.
Divisional Ammunition Column.
1/5th Hants Howitzer Battery.
86th Heavy Battery R.G.A. 5-inch. } on
104th Heavy Battery R.G.A. 4-inch (less 1 section). } barges.
Two 15-pr. guns as post guns.
48th Pioneers.
34th Divisional Sig. Co.
No. 17 and 22 Companies, Sappers and Miners, and a Bridge Train.
Searchlight Section.
Army Corps Signal Company.
Nos. 1, 2, 106 Field Ambulances.
2 Sections No. 19 Clearing Hospital.
4 4.7in. guns on horse-boats.
H.M. Naval armed launches *Comet*, *Shaitan*, *Sumana*, reinforced later by two seaplanes.
2 aeroplanes (reinforced later by two more).
2 Pack sets of Wireless.

The total being some 11,000 combatants.

From Ali-al-Gharbi I intended that the Division should move forward in two columns :—

Column " A." 16th and 17th Brigades and two Batteries, R.F.A., by march route on right bank.

Column " B." 18th Brigade and Divisional Artillery
Divisional Ammunition Column. } by
Divisional Supply Column. } ship.
Field Ambulance.

On 11th September, at Ali-al-Gharbi, I issued complete orders for the advance to Sheikh Saad on the following day.

On 13th September I reconnoitred Sheikh Saad, on the gunboat *Comet*, with the Senior Naval Officer, Captain Mackenzie, R.N. After a few rifle shots half a troop of cavalry galloped away, helped in their flight by our machine gun on the bridge Sheikh Saad had been abandoned by the hostile mixed

detachment of security, which fell back on the Turkish main body at Essinn, on our approach.

The Division halted in the Musandak reach on this date. The heat can only be described as terrific—110° to 116° in the shade. Nevertheless, by marching from daybreak to 8.30 a.m. only, the casualties were not great during the march. On 12th September, 67 men fell out, of whom 39 were British (one died) and 28 were Indian soldiers. On the march on 13th September, 25 British and 9 Indian soldiers fell out. After this date the rate dropped to *nil*.

On 14th September, an aerial reconnaissance was carried out by Major Reilly on the Turkish position at Essinn, near Kut-al-Amara ; he went 28 miles (three or four miles beyond Kut), or 56 miles there and back. The reconnaissance reported that the enemy's trenches and camp sites on the right bank were deserted ; gun emplacements could be seen, but no guns ; but there were camps on the left bank, and lighters and steamers were seen. Afterwards it was proved that the enemy had concealed their guns, and the infantry were put in covered trenches on sighting the aeroplane.

On receipt of this report I ordered another aerial reconnaissance and also one by the naval flotilla, which was to engage partially and make the enemy show their guns, for I suspected that they had concealed themselves. The reconnaissance of the naval flotilla having returned, the S.N.O. was convinced that Nureddin Pacha's force was in position at Essinn in full strength, and the A.P.O.* was informed by the Arabs on the banks of the river near Essinn that the Turks were digging entrenchments across the neck of dry land, between the marshes of Suwada and Suwechi at the northern extremity of their position on the left bank, while six more guns had arrived and " some cavalry." It was also reported that there was a great marsh on this flank. This, of course, was the flank I had decided to turn and attack with my Principal Mass.

I marched again on 15th September to Abu Rummànah, some eight miles from the enemy's position.

Here I had to halt in order to get up the 63rd Battery, R.F.A., and the howitzer battery, together with the remaining supplies from Amarah. This entailed sending back the whole of my ships, and thus I was unable to advance till the 25th, on which night the last of the ships arrived. I was much worried over this, and naturally it was a most serious delay, due solely to the fact that an insufficient number of decked barges had been given to me.

The enemy were digging in hard, and consequently were growing stronger daily. I had received news that Nureddin was strengthening his extreme left flank ; and that there was a

* Assistant Political Officer—Major Leachman, Royal Sussex Regiment.

marsh also on the northern (left) flank, of the enemy gave me food for serious reflection. On the arrival of the division at Abu Rummànah I bivouacked it on the right bank. Owing to the depth of the water the ships had to be brought in on this side ; otherwise I had intended at this point to halt on the left bank, to which I must cross before battle.

I talked matters over with Major Reilly, and asked him to make an air reconnaissance, and I also directed a cavalry reconnaissance to determine the extent of dry land between the two marshes, and to investigate the trenches which, it was said, were being dug in this locality. Reilly, a most daring and able aviator, had done excellent reconnaissance work from Sheikh Saad, and had established the fact that the bulk of the Turkish force was not on the right bank, but on the left, very strongly entrenched in a line of works which extended from the river bank in a north-westerly direction. On the right bank Nureddin had a smaller force occupying some two and a half miles of works, which were dug along the site of an ancient canal. A boat-bridge connected the forces, divided by the river.

On 16th September we had to regret the loss of an aeroplane and two officers. The Naval Flotilla saw the aeroplane come down close to the enemy's trenches, whence it had been under heavy rifle fire. It had first been seen at a height of at least 4,500 feet, gliding down. As it passed over the trenches on the left bank very heavy fire was opened. Three or four hundred men were seen to rush out of concealed trenches and surround it immediately it landed, which it did without crashing. The ships at once opened fire on it, and the crowd around it went to ground. Trusting to Nureddin's generosity and that spirit of *camaraderie* which used to exist between British and Turkish officers (but at that time, alas ! was dying, owing to German intrigue), I wrote to the Turkish commander sending some money and clothes for these officers, in the hope that they were alive.

From Abu Rummànah, Major Reilly carried out the air reconnaissance I had asked for, excellently well. He was supported by the gunboats, and he brought back a very fine piece of work—a map and detailed information. The appearance of large numbers of tents indicated reinforcements. It was seen that the enemy's Torres Vedras-like line of earthworks, entrenchments, and redoubts of the most modern type extended for twelve miles all told, on both banks of the river. But, as there was space enough of dry land for me to make my turning movement on the left flank, I did not change my plan of attack.

The cavalry reconnaissance showed me that the terrain was hard and good between the two marshes, and was some two miles wide. The road to this defile from Nakhailat village was equally good, and was fit for the three arms.

On 17th September I wired to the Army Commander, describing the results of the reconnaissances. I said that the enemy's position was a very formidable one, and told him that I proposed to make use of the two battalions of the 30th Brigade on the line of communication between Ali-al-Gharbi and the 6th Division as a reinforcement, as all my intelligence information pointed to Nureddin Pacha having received considerable reinforcements, and there was no doubt that the position was much stronger than anything we had as yet encountered in the campaign. Thus I should need every man I could get. My request for this half brigade—under the command of Colonel Climo, who had been so useful to me at Kurna—was granted.

On 18th September I ordered the bivouac of the force to be lightly entrenched—so as to be, in fact, an entrenched camp. In this way outposts or detachments of security were economised, only small posts being installed on likely avenues of approach. I strengthened the detachment pushed out on the left bank on the bridge-head principle, and I constructed a good road towards the enemy on the right bank in order to deceive him as to the point of my intended attack.

It will have been seen that the force was already grouped for fighting in two portions—Principal Mass and Minimum Force—from the moment I moved from Ali-al-Gharbi, though I did not actually call it so in orders.

I ordered that the existing " groups " or " brigade areas " for quartering purposes be dissolved as soon as the force advanced from this camp, as we were now within striking distance of the enemy. I also published in orders that Brigadiers should issue most strict instructions to O.C. Units that the wounded in action were to be attended to only by the stretcher-bearers. It was most essential, I pointed out, for the wounded more than others, that our force should win, and the fewer men drawn from the front line to take charge of the wounded the greater the chance of success. In this direction, I added, there had been occasions in the campaign, notably at Shaiba, where fighting-men fell out in large numbers to assist wounded to the rear, thus endangering the result of that battle. This was utterly wrong and unpermissible, and I said that I should hold O.C. Units responsible if it occurred again. In all battles there is a lot of this kind of thing, and it is difficult to deal with, unless commanding officers are held severely responsible. There are always to be found considerable numbers of men, who, on the pretence of looking after the wounded, skulk away to the rear of the fight and do not appear again. It will be remembered by students of military history that General Colin Campbell, at the battle of the Alma, declared to the Highland Brigade that if any men fell out under the pretence of helping the wounded he would

post their name as cowards in their villages at home. Colin Campbell was an old Peninsular veteran who well knew the danger of permitting this skulking.

I directed that the hour of departure of all ships from Ali-al-Gharbi up river should be reported by the A.Q.M.G. to the S.N.O., who would arrange that a gunboat should meet and escort them past the Orah Ruins reach.

As soon as Reilly had completed his air reconnaissance and sketches I had ample and exact information. I issued Battle Instructions to the General Officers commanding the Brigades and the Senior Naval Officer, and at the same time I directed my Staff to draw up Administration Instructions, which were to be attached to my Battle Instructions and to contain directions for land and water transport and arrangements for the wounded. It was, I considered, necessary for me to issue these "general instructions," since I had not had the tactical training of the division in peace time, but had taken over the command during a campaign. I give them in full in the Appendix to Part II, as they show how closely I adhered always to the fundamental principles of war stated in the first chapter.

Owing to the excellent work of Major Reilly in his aerial reconnaissances, I had an accurate knowledge and sketch of the enemy's position and its entrenchments, which consisted of up-to-date fire trenches, main fire trenches, wing trenches, and communication ways. That section of the enemy's defences on the left bank between the Suwada marsh and the Tigris was by far the strongest, and was well covered with a zone of barbed wire and other obstacles. It was this section that the Minimum Force would attack, moving from Nakhailat village.

Nureddin's extreme left flank, which I intended to overwhelm with my Principal Mass, consisted of entrenchments not nearly so elaborate as the main section described above. It was divided from the main section of his position by a gap of some 2,000 yards, formed by the Suwada marsh. Nureddin evidently never suspected that I should attack with a wide turning movement over six miles from the river, and it will be seen that it came as a complete surprise. He expected the usual thing with a British force. A disembarkation from the ships, an advance in two columns on the two banks of the impassable Tigris and two separated frontal attacks. He was absolutely confident of victory in his strong position. Had I attacked as he expected I must have met with a severe defeat, so strong were the works, but I had no intention of giving him a victory by such tactics. I was more than satisfied to see that he had disseminated a considerable part of his force on the right bank of the river, and, as I knew he had a bridge, I intended to demonstrate with my Principal Mass on the right bank, as if it were about to attack the enemy's position there, and then secretly in the night to convey it across the river to

the left bank by the boat-bridge I should throw across east of Nakhailat. It would make a march in the night as far as the Ataba—some six miles—when it would swing to the westward, and, passing on both sides of the Ataba Marsh, fall on the enemy's left flank and rear, moving south and rolling up his line as it advanced towards the Tigris. Nureddin's delusion that I intended to attack on both banks was started by my camp on the right bank at Sannaiyat—as I hoped it would be. I was helped also by the demonstration by the Principal Mass on the right bank towards Essinn on 26th September. This even caused Nureddin to march his General Reserve from the left bank by way of the boat-bridge to the right bank. As it turned out, had his General Reserve been behind his left wing in reasonable time—and this must have been possible had it stayed on the left bank—Delamain's turning attack would undoubtedly have been repulsed. As it was, he was held up for a while, and a very critical time set in for an hour or two before he succeeded in rolling up the left wing.

I had no water carts and not enough land transport to carry drinking water for the Principal Mass, which was a grave difficulty, for although the cavalry reconnaissance had reported the water in the Suwada Marsh as " brackish, but drinkable " in an emergency, Delamain's troops found they could not drink it, and, before they could reach the river bank that night, they had marched at least 18 miles, including a hard fight. This practically without water, and in September in Mesopotamia !

One or two small skirmishes between our Indian cavalry patrols and the hostile Arab horsemen took place whilst we were at Abu Rummànah. One night the enemy's Thornycroft boat, with a light gun, shelled us from up stream for a few minutes, but no damage was done.

The effects of mirage in the desert are extraordinary. It was reported to me one morning, whilst we were bivouacked at Sannaiyat, that hostile columns were approaching from the south-west. I mounted the observation tower and we distinctly saw what appeared to be a line of quarter-columns at a distance of some six miles. I ordered all the troops to get under arms at once and even put the Principal Mass in motion to take the enemy in flank. It was only a mirage ! I have often seen the mirage in the desert in Egypt and the Sudan, but I never saw anything so extraordinary as this, and, although knowing all about mirage effects, I was entirely deceived.

I could not believe my eyes when I saw what were evident columns. " Nureddin is not such a fool," I said, " as to leave his beloved position, at which he and his troops have laboured ever since I took Amarah, and come into the open for me to beat him ! " I was overjoyed, for it seemed that he was about to try his luck in an open battle, with no favour.

At this time I saw a good deal of the Bishop of Lahore, who had been allowed by Sir John Nixon to come up and see the force. He was staying on board the *Mosul*, hospital ship, and he often dined with me on board the *Mejidieh*. I much enjoyed talking to him. I never met anyone so keen on seeing what active service is like; and he is one of the most popular and charming men I have ever met. He did yeoman work for me in the battle, working in a steam launch, bringing wounded back from Column "B" to the hospital ship, and risking his own life under fire. A brave and a good man, I felt deeply grateful to him, and mentioned him in my despatches.

I was delayed till the morning of 25th September for the 63rd Battery, R.F.A., which was needed with Column "B," and the 5th Hants Howitzer Battery. I would not advance till I got them, as I looked on both as vitally important, and I especially wanted Delamain to have the Howitzers to clear out the trenches on Nureddin's extreme left flank. I would not advance till those troops arrived, although I know Nureddin was continually getting small packets of reinforcements,* and although the political state of affairs in Persia, I was told, required a success. I was not going to violate the principle of Economy of Force for any political reason. By 25th September these units had joined, and I was ready to advance. Accordingly I issued my operation orders for battle, which simply put into effect the General Instructions I had given to all Brigadiers and the S.N.O.—and for this reason are printed in the Appendix to Part II.

Sir John Nixon had announced his intention to be present at the battle. I received a wire from the M.G.G.S., dated from Amarah on 20th September, asking on what date I intended to attack Nureddin, as Sir John Nixon wished to be there. "He does not intend to interfere with your arrangements, but, in case questions of general policy have to be settled as a result of the action, he wishes to be on the spot. What date do you suggest for his arrival at Sannaiyat?" I was also asked for a gunboat to escort him up river.

I replied that I reckoned on attacking on 25th September, which was the earliest possible date I could manage, and I suggested the 24th as the date for General Nixon to arrive. I received an answer to this telegram to the effect that I must not think that General Nixon wished to precipitate my plans in any way.

On 22nd September I received a telegram from Sir John Nixon of the same date, stating that he had wired to the India Office, pointing out that the 6th Division had fought five engagements in the last eleven months, and were on the eve of a sixth. Recommendations for rewards for British officers

* A Turkish cavalry officer and his orderly were captured in a reconnaissance about this time, and the latter gave the numbers of Nureddin as 15,000 combatants.

had been telegraphed home a month before. Could not these rewards be published immediately? He had received a reply that: "The Secretary of State fully appreciates grand services 6th Division and hopes Gazette will appear shortly. Meantime he wishes them a speedy and complete success to crown all their previous triumphs and assures them that their services are not forgotten."

On receipt of the telegram I published the following *communiqué* to the troops:—

"The Secretary of State has telegraphed to General Sir John Nixon, wishing the 6th Division a speedy and complete success, to crown all their previous triumphs, and to assure them that their services are not forgotten.

"In conveying this message to the troops, Major-General Townshend wishes to say that the Division has fought five engagements in the last eleven months, and has gained in the Empire a reputation second to none, be it on the banks of the Yser in Flanders or on the banks of the Tigris or Euphrates in Mesopotamia.

"There is no need for him to remind the troops of what their King and Country expect of them, and he hopes that a good blow struck now may well end their Mesopotamian labours."

On this date, I see in my diary that my combatants for the battle were 11,103. This included 711 details on their way from Amarah, who would arrive in the next day or so. Of the total number 3,148 were British and 7,955 Indians. Of the British troops the 2nd Battalion Dorset Regiment numbered 640; the 2nd Battalion Norfolks, 660; and the 1st Oxford and Bucks L.I., 756 combatants. On 24th September two sea-planes with bombs arrived, and, on the 25th, Sir John Nixon, with the bulk of his staff on his steamer, the *Malamir*. He told me that he had received a telegram from the Commander-in-Chief in India, to say: "*No going beyond Kut-al-Amara.*" This is interesting in view of my conversation with Sir Beauchamp Duff at Simla, given at the beginning of Chapter V. The questions arise:—When was Sir Beauchamp Duff induced to alter his mind; and who persuaded him to do so?

CHAPTER VII

THE BATTLE OF KUT-AL-AMARA

On 26th September, in the early grey, the orders which carried out my preliminary measures for the battle were put in motion. Everything went off to my satisfaction, Column " B " safely disembarked on the left bank below Nakhailat, the heavy guns being got into position in accordance with my General Instructions. The boat-bridge was soon in the course of construction, and Column " A " was at the Chahela Mounds on the right bank ready to demonstrate along that bank as a feint. Column " B " was to make a night advance on the 26th along the left bank towards the enemy's position in order to take up a position of assembly under cover of darkness, whence it could move forward at daybreak to attack that section of the Turkish position, Suwada Marsh—Tigris bank. The 48th Pioneers installed the heavy artillery in the positions indicated in the General Instructions, whence it would not be necessary to shift them again, since 4,500 to 5,000 yards from the enemy's works is quite close enough in the case of 4- and 5-inch guns to permit of effective support to infantry, when they are near enough to make a push for the enemy's entrenchments. The sappers ran up an observation tower for me behind the artillery position. It was very quickly put together with light timbers, and, I must say, was a very rickety and dangerous affair.

When darkness came Column " B " moved forward and installed itself in a position in readiness for the attack, taking advantage of the water-cuts and *coupures du terrain* which abounded along the bank. Fry had extended Column " B " on a front of about 1,000 yards, as I had suggested that he should.

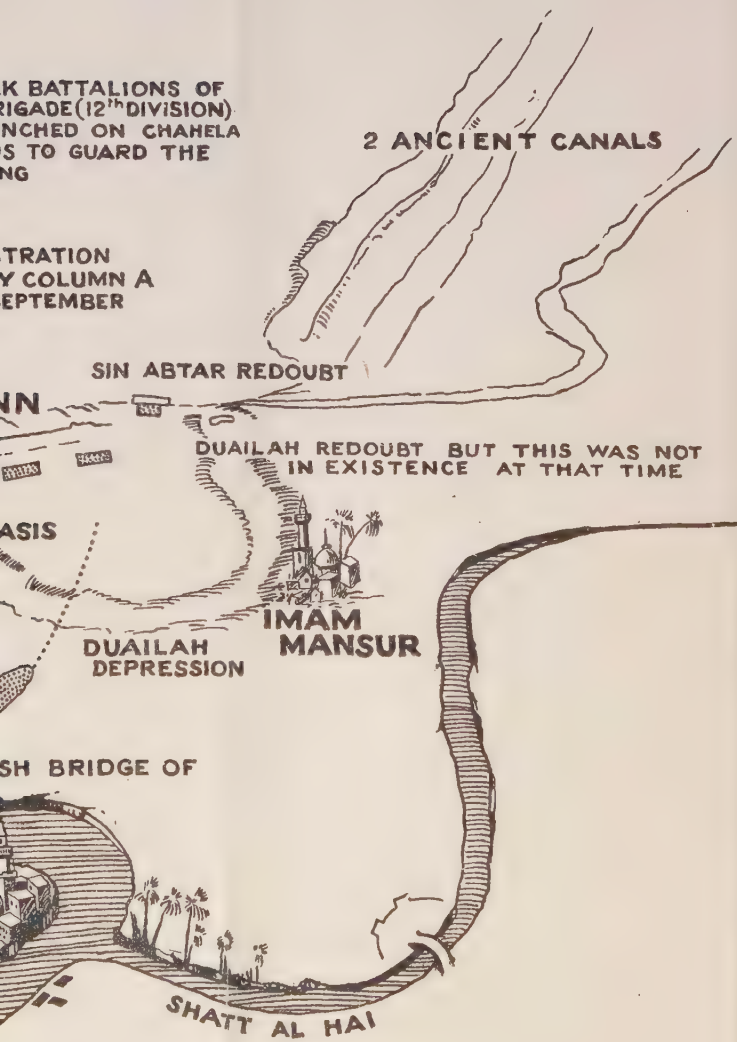
On the morning of 27th September, the battle began, Column " A " demonstrating towards Essinn on the right bank, whilst Column " B," the Minimum Force, was soon severely engaged. All the Turkish guns on the line Suwada Marsh—Saddle Back Hill—the Tigris, opened on Column " B " as it worked its way forward, supported by the Heavy Artillery. In the evening, Fry, who carried out his instructions to the letter, had worked up his firing line to some 800 yards from the enemy's entrenchments.

At dusk I was at the bridge watching the crossing of Column " A " from the right bank to the left. As they reached the left bank the troops continued their march in column of route

BATTLE OF KUT AL

BIRDS'EYE VIEW OF BATTLE FIELD OF K
IN ORDER TO DESCRIBE THE FR
THE MINIMUM FORCE & TURNING MO

MARA 27/28 Sept 1915



AL AMARA 27/28 SEPTEMBER 1915
AL & HOLDING ATTACK OF
IENT BY PRINCIPAL MASS

into the desert to carry out the turning movement of the Principal Mass. When it was dark the mixed detachment of Column "A" which had demonstrated towards Essinn on the right bank, as *en avant garde* of the Principal Mass behind it, and had dug itself in in the afternoon in order to impose on the enemy still further, was retired and brought across the bridge. I learned that a havildar and two or three men of the 20th Punjabis had deserted from this detachment to the Turks. This was bad news, for the enemy would learn of the manœuvre of the Principal Mass, but I hoped that they would not be brought before Nureddin till the next morning, by which time it would be too late for him to alter his dispositions to any advantage.*

I had ridden out to the observation tower west of Nakhailat, while it was yet dark. At daybreak, Column "B," in accordance with its instructions, executed an attack which had all the *appearance* of a decisive one, in regard to the volume and intensity of fire, but in reality was only to contain and occupy the enemy in this particular section. It was on a front of some 1,000 to 1,200 yards—greatly in excess of the ordinary frontage of a brigade. I brought up also many transport carts, etc., in the distance behind it, to induce the enemy to think that the bulk of my forces were waiting to support Column B's advance.† Sir John Nixon, accompanied by his staff, who had arrived at Nakhailat from Amarah in his steamer, came to my post at the tower and stayed there all day, not in any way interfering with my orders, and I carried on as if he were not present. With some senior generals this would have been an impossible state of affairs. They would have interfered, perhaps have given instructions to me; but Sir John Nixon left me entirely alone. It was very seldom we even conversed, for I passed the day on the top of the rickety tower with Evans, my G.S.O., I.

General Fry's *rôle* was clearly given in my General Instructions, so I did not bother much about Column "B," whose progress was not only assisted by the heavy artillery, but also by the fire of the gunboats on the river, which were echelonned forward, so to speak. All my interest was centred on the progress of the turning attack by the Principal Mass under Delamain, for, when I saw the smoke of his guns six or seven miles away to the north-west and heard a violent fire, I should know that he was assaulting the enemy's left flank and rear with the bayonet and that he would soon roll it up. I could then change the attack of Column "B" into a decisive one, and the battle would be practically won. It ought to end in a perfect rout, I thought, for the turning movement had succeeded perfectly; the night march had gone off without a hitch; I had placed ny Principal Mass, by a wide sweeping manœuvre,

* As a matter of fact Nureddin, on hearing the news, did not believe it. He was holding a conference of his senior officers at the time and thought it was a ruse of mine to send false deserters to induce him to make a mistake by moving his troops to the left flank!

† In the distance these carts looked like artillery or troops advancing.

on the enemy's flank and rear, and on that flank, moreover, which was nearest his natural line of retreat—the Baghdad road. I should now haul round the Principal Mass as a fisherman hauls in his net—and the result would be decisive. The vistory ought to give great results ; Nureddin's force might well be destroyed ; and in that case Baghdad would be at my mercy if I were ordered to advance on it. This was what passed through my mind. But as the student of military history, and especially of Napoleon's campaigns, knows, there are always great risks with a turning move—which is why the more cautious Moltke preferred the less risky, though less decisive, enveloping attack. I was to experience some of the risks of the turning attack myself—and, calling to mind a long list of the unforeseen accidents in the history of Napoleon's campaigns which upset his turning attacks, I was not surprised at the accidents which happened to Column " A," and was able to bear them philosophically.

Between 7 and 8 a.m. I received a message from Delamain by the telephone line laid in his tracks, to say that the turning attack was developed. Curling smoke and the sound of his guns denoted his progress, but the sand-hills in the distance prevented my having a view of the action of Column " A." About 11, I got a message that he had carried the hostile trenches in front of him. I was very pleased, imagining that now he was sweeping these entrenchments from north to south, and that the Turks would soon be *à la débandade*. I learned afterwards that he had attacked the trenches frontally with two battalions, the Dorsets and the 117th Mahrattas, whilst the bulk of his force—six battalions under Brigadier-General Hoghton—had gone round the northern extremity of the Ataba Marsh, following the cavalry, in order to completely turn the Turkish extreme flank. They took so long to round the marsh that Delamain could not wait for them any longer, and so attacked with only two battalions. The whole benefit of the Mass on the enemy's weakest point was thus lost—and it went near to costing us the battle. For, although Delamain, by dint of his great energy and personality, carried the extreme flank trenches, still the enemy, who outnumbered his two battalions, clung on to the other entrenchments tenaciously, as the Turkish soldier always does. Soon I had a disquieting message from Delamain, that he feared he would not be able to carry the trenches ! I could not understand this, as there was nothing to stop the Principal Mass if all had been united.

The struggle that took place at this decisive point of the battle was a desperate one. The Dorsets as usual covered themselves with glory, and the 117th Mahrattas also fought very well. At last the tardy appearance of Hoghton, with the bulk of the turning attack, to the westward of the enemy, i.e., in their backs, decided the struggle in favour of Delamain, and

the Turks on the extreme left wing retreated to the south-west.

Thus, instead of rolling up the Turks by midday, I began to fear that it would be a long business, for hours went by, and I heard nothing from Delamain, since the telephone line had come to an end and no more messages could reach me. It proved that he had united his force again and was resting his exhausted troops, for it was a very hot day, and the water in the Suwada marsh was brackish and not fit to drink. This was contrary to the cavalry reconnaissance report, which had said that the water was not good but that it would do at a pinch. It was a terrible disappointment to me, for now was the time that I needed the Principal Mass to fall rapidly on the rear of the Turkish troops in the defences of the sector Suwada Marsh—Saddle Back Hill—the Tigris. In such a case, the Turks *must* run, since General Fry, with Column " B," was attacking the same entrenchment in front. I had an absolutely crushing victory in my hand if Delamain had now advanced. I sent Reilly in an aeroplane to find out what was happening. He landed by Delamain's force and I heard the whole story from him on his return. (I had no pack wireless equipment with the troops at this time, although I had a wireless installation on the *Mejidieh*). At last I received a message from Delamain that his troops were utterly " cooked " and could not move. As they had done fourteen to fifteen miles in the desert, including a night march and severe fighting, this was not altogether surprising.

Even if the cavalry had been sent to menace the rear of the Turks it should have sufficed to put them on the move ; but I could never ascertain where the cavalry had gone and what they were doing. It was 4 p.m. before Delamain got his troops going again. No one knew—I am sure none of my staff did—how very anxious I had been over the success of this turning attack, with its unaccountable delays. It was at about this time that one of our defensive posts on the Tigris sent me wires for help, as a large body of Arab and Turkish cavalry, with guns, was threatening an attack. I declined to send away a man while the battle was on, saying that I was relieving the post by winning the battle, and they must hold on.

It was getting near sunset when Delamain's force was heard to be very heavily engaged about west-south-west from my tower. We could see flashes indicating a fire of extreme violence. This was an encounter between Delamain and the Turkish General Reserve—a brigade of two or three battalions, which had marched from the right bank of the river *viâ* the Turkish bridge of boats near Kut to restore the battle on the left wing. I discovered this by means of Reilly and his aeroplane, who were invaluable to me, for I got no message from the turning attack. After a short fire-fight Delamain ordered a

general advance with the bayonet. The Turks declined the shock, as they always will, when in the open and not entrenched, and retreated towards Kut.

In co-operation with the new advance of the Principal Mass I had ordered a general advance of the troops under General Fry, ordering him to turn his attack into a decisive one; but, owing to the violence of the Turkish artillery and rifle fire, he could make no progress nearer to the enemy's works on the sector Suwada—Saddle Back Hill—the Tigris than five or six hundred yards in places, and there he had dug in again.

I had ordered the Naval Flotilla to assist this advance in every way possible. I sent Captain Bastow, my aide-de-camp, in a steam launch to the Senior Naval Officer, Lieutenant-Commander Cookson, to ask if he could not make an effort to break the obstacle which the Turks had flung across the Tigris at the point where the lines of entrenchments, on both sides of the river, reached the bank. If Cookson could break through and get to Kut, I believed he would capture the Turkish steamers It was dusk when the gallant Cookson pushed forward with his three gunboats, himself on the *Comet*, and under a tremendous fire he endeavoured to cut the chains of what was found to be, not an obstacle, but a flying bridge, constructed of an iron lighter running on chains. Cookson was shot dead as, axe in hand, he was cutting at the cable. He had gone alongside it in a ship's dinghy, under a furious rifle fire, which riddled the funnel and upper works of the *Comet*. After the brave Cookson was killed, the gunboats fell back a little, but continued to shell the Turks from a range of some 500 yards.

As darkness descended I ordered Fry's guns to cease fire, as I was afraid they would hit Delamain's troops behind the Turks. I told Sir John Nixon, who had joined me at the observation post, that the battle was virtually won. I knew the Turks must go in the night, for they could never stay on in daylight in the hole in which they now found themselves owing to the turning movement of my Principal Mass.

"I know they'll go in the dark," I repeated to General Nixon, as I left the observation post to return to my head-quarters at Nakhailat, after ordering Fry to ascertain by patrols in the night if the Turks were still there and telling him that he must assault the position at daylight if they had not left it, *coûte que coûte*. I was certain the Turkish force on the right bank would also retreat when the main force on the left was going.

I was right in all my surmises; at daylight I received news that the defences were abandoned. The Turks had all escaped by the river bank in the night, passing in front of the Principal Mass under Delamain. They had carried off most of their guns, but seventeen remained in our hands, with 1,289 prisoners.

The Turks lost 1,700 killed and wounded ; and our casualties were 1,229 killed and wounded.

The Battle of Kut-al-Amara can be said to have been one of the most important in the history of the British Army in India. There had been nothing of its magnitude either in the Afghan war or the Indian Mutiny, for it was fought against troops equally well armed and of equal numbers to ourselves. In addition we ejected them from a very strong and up-to-date position commanding ground as flat and as open as a billiard-table with nothing to check their fire-sweep.

I was informed that the Arab and Turkish cavalry had retreated from their attack on the post at Sannaiyat on hearing that the Turks were defeated in the battle, but they had captured and burnt two coal and oil barges. This was very bad news for me,as it would cripple the movement of my steamers. I lost no time in getting out my orders for the pursuit.

Before " B " Column was embarked it was late in the afternoon of the 29th, for it took a great part of the day to collect the 18th Brigade and the 63rd Battery and get them on board ship. The embarkation took hours—to my great discontent.

I had sent General Delamain to occupy the town of Kut. General Hoghton's brigade was to camp on the river-bank, somewhere in the bend south of Saddle Back Hill, in order to evacuate wounded and gather arms, etc. ; he was then to follow Delamain into Kut. I had determined to conduct the pursuit myself for reasons very similar to those which had actuated me in the pursuit after the battle of Kurna. There were many considerations to be taken into account. If, for example, I managed to overtake the Turks on the march in my ships I could break them up and keep them off the river, to which they must come for water. In this way I might turn an orderly retreat into a rout, as I did in the pursuit after Kurna ; and in that case I might even enter Baghdad with the fugitives, as I had entered Amarah. Bluff might well come in a second time. But, if the Turks managed to stand and rally in the prepared position of Ctesiphon, which was said to be very strong, I could haul off my brigade in my ships and return to Kut without loss of prestige and there consolidate my position.

It was impossible to entrust the solution of such complicated questions to a subordinate, questions which only I could judge what I should or should not do. This is why I left Delamain at Kut to reorganise the division, not to come on unless I sent for him. But there is a great difference between theory and practice in war, and between criticism and execution. There was very little water in the river, and there were plenty of shoals to negotiate at this time of year. We stuck a whole day quite close to Kut, one ship after another running aground. It was nearly *two days* (of great toil) before we got clear of Kut, and then it was too late. The Turks had retreated in good

order along both banks of the Tigris; they had fought perfectly steadily and well, and I found that I had quite different troops to deal with at the Battle of Kut-al-Amara from those which had taken part in the Battle of Kurna and the advance on Amarah (where the Turkish force consisted entirely of Arab battalions, with the exception of one Turkish regular battalion). If the Turks had fled in rout after the Battle of Kut-al-Amara, as they did after Kurna, it had been my intention, as I have already said, to seize the opportunity of following them into Baghdad in gunboats.

Roughly speaking, it was the same distance from Kut-al-Amara to Baghdad as the pursuit from Kurna to Amarah had been—about ninety miles. But this pursuit was a very different matter. The Turks were retreating in solid bodies and in good order; the river was at its shallowest; we remained aground at times for half a day; and it soon became evident that the Turks would rally in their prepared position at Ctesiphon. There could be no question of my entering Baghdad as I entered Amarah—along with a routed enemy.

I won the battle of Kut-al-Amara by the turning manœuvre alone. Had I attempted a frontal attack with only a slight overlapping envelopment I should inevitably have been repulsed. The turning attack by the Principal Mass—the decisive attack itself, that is to say—had hung painfully in the balance at one time in the afternoon of 28th September. General Delamain told me at Azizieh, afterwards, that he felt it his duty to let me know that he did not think his Indian troops would storm trenches again if put at them, and the success of the turning attack had depended greatly on the battalion of the Dorset Regiment, which as usual had performed prodigies of valour. It must be remembered that, prior to the actions of Kurna and Kut-al-Amara, the Sixth Division fought the battles of Sahil and Shaiba, in the latter of which it had been very severely tried—for a long time the issue of that battle had hung in the balance. In addition to this, the Battle of Kurna and the advance, in the hottest season of the year, to Amarah, with the subsequent advance on Kut in the still great heat of early September, had greatly tried the health of the troops; large numbers of men had been sent to the base hospitals; and there was an air of staleness over the force. Thus I was not surprised by what Delamain told me. In all armies the troops of the offensive must be changed frequently.

From want of land transport, my cavalry were practically tied to the ships, and so they accomplished little in the pursuit. And here I must remark on the great drawback of caste prejudices in Indian troops as regards the conduct of war in countries beyond India. When I asked the O.C. cavalry why he had not pushed on and got into contact with the retreating enemy, he told me that he had not been able to bring the

cooking-pots with him owing to our want of transport, and that his Sikhs and Hindus would not use the Arab cooking-pots found in the villages to prepare their food. I state this fact, not as a criticism of the valour of the Indian cavalry, whose record no one appreciates more highly than I, but in order to emphasise the disadvantages of using them in foreign countries.

I had no British cavalry at this juncture, as the 14th Hussars did not join me until December. If even one British cavalry regiment had been attached to my forces at that time, I should have been able to inflict severe loss on the Turks in their retreat. As it was they were unmolested—and all for the sake of some cooking-pots !

On arrival, on 3rd October, at Azizieh, a small village and telegraph station on the left bank of the Tigris, some sixty miles up river from Kut-al-Amara, I received Major Reilly's aerial reconnaissance report. The retreating Turks had halted at the prepared position of Ctesiphon and were already installed in that formidable defence-work, astride the river, and on both banks—as they had been at Kut-al-Amara. Reilly reported six miles of entrenchments on the left bank, where the principal works were situated. There were also three steamers, six large iron lighters, and many men and store-houses.

On my arrival at Azizieh I received a wireless telegram from the M.G.G.S., in which he gave me an appreciation of the situation sent by Sir John Nixon to the Chief of the General Staff in India. In this Sir John described my pursuit operations and mentioned that the Turks were retreating in two columns, with their ships ahead of them. He remarked on the position that the Turkish Commander-in-Chief had prepared since early in June at Ctesiphon, and stated that the Turks were falling back upon it. Of course, I had been reporting all this to Nixon during my pursuit, but I differed from his appreciation in the statement that the Turks were not likely to receive any material reinforcements from Baghdad or beyond, with the exception of possibly 1,500 infantry and two guns from the Euphrates line.

Nixon also stated in his appreciation that there were two courses open to us :

(1) To discontinue the pursuit ;

(2) To press on with our ships and gunboats and keep in touch with the enemy, harassing his retreat as much as possible in order to prevent him from making a further stand.

He said that, if the Turks should make a stand, the pursuing troops could reconnoitre his position with aeroplanes, while the remaining brigades and the divisional troops could be sent up to join me. He considered that the pursuit, slow though it had been owing to unavoidable circumstances, caused by the

peculiar difficulties of navigation in shallow channels, would have a demoralising effect on the Turks and a correspondingly favourable one on the inhabitants of the portion of Mesopotamia in the hands of the British. He estimated the Turkish force at 4,000 bayonets, 500 sabres and 20 guns.

I find in my diary for 3rd October the following remarks: "The Army Commander does not seem to realise the weakness and danger of his line of communications. We are now some 380 miles from the sea, and we have only two weak divisions, including my own, in the country! There is my division to do the fighting, and Gorringe's to hold the line of communications from Kut to the sea. Thus there is no possible support to give me if I receive a check."

It seemed to me that it was useless to continue the pursuit any longer, so I decided to halt, to land the 18th Brigade and its battery at Azizieh, and to report to Sir John Nixon, who was at Kut, that in my opinion we ought to return to that place and consolidate. Since Sir John was on the spot it was necessary for me to ascertain his views on the question of my return. Had he been at Amarah or Basra, I should have returned to Kut without asking, for I was now absolutely against a further advance unless I had two divisions—an army corps—under my command. Accordingly I sent the famous telegram which has been so much discussed in both Houses of Parliament and in the press.

I first wrote this report, intending to send it by my aide-de-camp. But the Arabs were attacking convoys along the Tigris, and, as I feared that it might fall into the hands of the enemy, I wired it. It was addressed to General Nixon's Chief of Staff, and was sent from Azizieh on 3rd October.

It is as follows:—

"By the aviator's report attached, you will see that the chance of breaking up the retreating Turkish forces, which by now have taken up a position at Salman Pak (Ctesiphon), no longer exists. That position is astride the Baghdad road and the Tigris, and it is estimated to be six miles of entrenchments. . . . . My opinion, if I may be allowed to express one, is that up to the battle of Kut our object has been to occupy the strategical position of Kut and to consolidate ourselves in the *vilayet* (province) of Basra. Ctesiphon is now held by the defeated Turkish forces. Should it not be considered politically advisable by the Government to occupy Baghdad at present on account of the doubtful situation at the Dardanelles, and the possibility of our small force being driven out of Baghdad by strong forces from Anatolia, which would compel us to retire down a long line of communications (Baghdad to the sea is some 400 miles), teeming with Arabs, at present more or less hostile, whose hostility would become active on hearing of our retreat, then I consider that on all

military grounds we should consolidate our position at Kut. The sudden fall of water, which made the advance of our ships most difficult, slow and toilsome, upset our plans of entering Baghdad on the heels of the Turks while they were retreating in disorder. If, on the other hand, it is the desire of the Government to occupy Baghdad, then, unless great risk is to be run, it is, in my opinion, absolutely necessary that the advance from Kut by road should be carried out methodically by two Divisions or one Army Corps, or by one Division supported closely by another complete Division, exclusive of the garrisons of the important places of Nasiriyeh, Ahwaz and Amarah. . . ."

In my diary of 3rd October, 1915, at Azizieh, I wrote my Appreciation of the Situation after the Battle of Kut-al-Amara.

" 1. In the case where Government does not contemplate occupying Baghdad our principle objective was the occupation of Kut-al-Amara, in order to consolidate the Basra Vilayet, and because from a strategic point of view Kut, at the junction of the Tigris and Shatt-al-Hai (which joins the Euphrates at Nasiriyeh), was more desirable than Amarah. Such were the reasons, I understand, that led to my operations against Nureddin Pacha. In order to do this, I had to defeat him and possibly destroy his force of nothing under 9,000 or 10,000 men.

" Nureddin Pacha has been heavily defeated, and is in full retreat on Baghdad—or rather, he will occupy the already prepared position at Ctesiphon (Salman Pak), which is the position which defends Baghdad.

" If the Government does not intend at present to advance on Baghdad :

" (*a*) Owing possibly to the very doubtful situation and hopes of success of our forces at the Dardanelles ;

" (*b*) The impossibility of sending another division to Mesopotamia, which would be the minimum force necessary to enable us to advance with security against Baghdad. To try a *coup de main* against Baghdad with my division alone—a distance of some 380 miles from the sea, the line of communications being occupied by utterly unreliable and hostile Arab tribes, who would all rise at the first news of the slightest check, and the only support being a weak division with no artillery whatever, which is, moreover, disseminated at Amarah, Nasiriyeh, Kurna, Basra, Ahwaz, etc.—would be, in my opinion, an unpardonable error or worse, not only from a strategical and tactical point of view, but also from a political one. A defeat would mean possibly a great disaster, which would shake the stability of India, and anyone advocating such a step would show in my opinion that he was utterly ignorant of the art of war.

" (*c*) Success in the Dardanelles is essential to our entering

Baghdad, *with the present force we have in Mesopotamia*—two very weak divisions without even their proper proportion of field artillery.

" Taught by the experience of their fatal retreat from Kurna to Amarah, when their disseminated force was practically destroyed by us and where the Arabs massacred many Turkish soldiers who straggled, the forces of Nureddin are retiring in good order and in solid bodies with a proper rearguard.

" That he is not broken up in this retreat is owing solely to the fact that there is hardly any water in the river. We have lost practically two days—stuck on shoals and mud-banks. As an example I advanced only eight miles yesterday. The escaping Turkish steamers, having thrown overboard all cargo and impedimenta and cut adrift mahelas, have crossed the shoals. The Turks are endowed by nature with strong knees and at this moment are entering their strong position at Salman Pak (Ctesiphon).

" Wellington once remarked in a letter to Lord Liverpool, that if he had done all that was expected of him by Government and the Press, he would have been ere this in the moon ; no one can deal with obstacles of nature of such a description as ships drawing more water than there is in bad pieces of channel. One of my two gunboats has had to be left behind, hopelessly stuck near Baghailah. She has wrenched and weakened the deck plates of her 12-pounder in the battle, and cannot guarantee to fire another 20 rounds! These are obstacles which cannot be overcome speedily. Had there been ordinary conditions of water, such as prevailed up to the time we reached Sannaiyat before the battle, we could have entered Baghdad with the fugitives, and we could have broken them up hopelessly. But the sudden fall of the water has prevented this.

" Even if we had done this, the Turkish Government at Constantinople would surely send a formidable force to retake Baghdad, since they are holding their own in the Dardanelles, and apparently even have the advantage. Then the Government of India would have to contemplate a retreat, which would be worse than that from Kabul in the 'forties, from every point of view.

" If we go to Baghdad we must stay there. That is certain.

" 2. In the case where Government decide to occupy Baghdad: Our principal objective would be to defeat the Turks in their position at Salman Pak (Ctesiphon), which covers Baghdad. To do this, I consider that we require another division in the country, and that two divisions—i.e., an Army Corps—should advance from Kut-al-Amara by *land*, as the river question renders ship-transport impossible. (Only empty ships can get up). I say two divisions, as we must make an absolute certainty of success, and not take risks.

"Nureddin has already some 5,000 men left and 20 guns, and all available reinforcements will be sent him."

It was evident to me that Sir John Nixon intended me to make a dash for Baghdad with my present inadequate force. It has been seen how I regarded the act of taking the offensive in a secondary theatre of the war with minimum forces. I was certain that such a violation of the principle of Economy of Force must result in disaster. In addition, I had just experienced a critical battle, which I had only won by superior tactics of manœuvre to that of my adversary. I had beaten Nureddin by skill of manœuvre alone. Had I attacked him frontally I should have experienced a disastrous defeat; and, as it was, victory hung in the balance for some hours. I had been very anxious, although I flatter myself that even my staff and Sir John Nixon had not been aware of my anxiety.

I deliberated long before I sent the telegram quoted on pages 124 and 125. It was not discipline to *protest*. My long experience of the army, and, in particular, my acquaintance with military history, told me that if I considered that the mission I was given might entail disaster to my country, my duty was to warn my superior; and, having done so, I was ready to carry out any order given to me. In particular I called to mind Wellington's explanation at the Court of Inquiry after the Convention of Cintra in 1808, in Portugal. Like him I did the utmost a subordinate general can do by pointing out to my superior general the rashness of the undertaking; if he thought differently from me it was my duty to do anything in my power to carry out his orders, even though I differed entirely with him as to the wisdom of such an operation. Herein lies the great distinction between military and civil subordinate situations. If, in a civil office, the subordinate differs materially from the superior, he ought to resign; but in military or naval appointments it is the duty of the subordinate commander to assist his superior in the manner in which that superior may deem his services most advantageous. That is the principle on which I acted in this affair, and on which I should act on a future occasion, if necessary. I remembered also that the Commander-in-Chief in India had agreed with me in Simla two or three months previously, when he said: "Not one inch shall you go beyond Kut-al-Amara unless I make you up to 30,000 or 40,000 men."

Supposing I were successful in winning the coming battle of Ctesiphon and occupying Baghdad, how long should I, with my weak force, still further weakened by the battle, be able to remain there in face of the great effort which the Germans and Turks would surely make to retake it with large forces from the Caucasus? No, I should have been directed to take Baghdad only if the expedition to Gallipoli were successful. And at

the same time I should have been given an adequate force to do so.

In connection with my action in pointing out to Sir John Nixon that my force was inadequate, I had the case of Marshal MacMahon in 1870 in my mind. It will be remembered that, after his defeat at Wörth, he was organising an army at Chalons, when he was ordered by the Government to advance to relieve Bazaine locked up in Metz. He replied that in his opinion he ought to unite all the forces available in France in a position covering Paris. Government repeated the order, MacMahon advanced accordingly, and was annihilated at Sedan.

Here I would explain to civilian readers that, generally speaking, there is a distinct difference between lines of communication and lines of operations. Lines of operations are the general directions or routes followed by an army in its advance, when moving from its base to its objective, while lines of communications are the land and water ways by means of which that army is fed and supplied. At times the line of communications differs considerably from a line of operations—when, for example, an army has to manœuvre in order to fight on a wide extent of front. However, in the Mesopotamian campaign our line of communications and line of operations were one and the same. As in the Nile Expedition, the Nile road and river were our one line of advance and supply, so in Mesopotamia the Tigris was our one means of food supply; and the road lay, as in the case of the Nile, always alongside the river. In addition, in the case of the Tigris, owing to the enormous floods, one could only march along the bank from towards the end of August to about March.

I had food for serious reflection in the fact that our line of communications, when I reached Azizieh, was some 320 miles in length, while my one weak division after the battle of Kut-al-Amara mustered only some 10,000 or 11,000 combatants, instead of 13,000—the complement of an Indian division. The long line of communications lay through a country of hostile Arabs, who never refrained from firing at our convoys, even when we had progressed past them up river, and would all rise, from Kut to Kurna, if once our little force were checked. It was guarded only by the two weak brigades of infantry which composed the 12th Division, which was not only scattered all the way from Basra to Kut-al-Amara, but in addition supplied the garrisons for Nasiriyeh, Ahwaz and Amarah—very important posts.

It may be interesting to recall that the length of Napoleon's line of communications, when he entered Moscow in 1812, from the Niemen, was 570 miles. 213,000 men actually marched with the Emperor. The remainder of the 600,000 men garrisoned Germany, especially the east of that country, and guarded the line of communications to France. Napoleon's

213,000 men traversed and occupied 70,000 square miles. In 1870, when the German armies sat down in front of Paris, they had 190 miles of line of communications between them and the German frontier. 475,000 men occupied and traversed 20,000 square miles. No argument is required to show which of the arrangements was the sounder, so far as regards the art of war. In no way could such a disaster have happened to Moltke as arrived to Napoleon.

What can be said of the risk run in my case? No other troops whatever but the two weak brigades holding the line of communications were in the country. Remember that we had as an enemy the Turk, armed as well as we were, as regards guns and rifles, plentifully supplied with ammunition, unsurpassed by any soldier when on the defensive and entrenched. This was quite unlike the enemy we encountered in the Nile Expeditions of 1886 or of 1896–1898, where we had only to meet untrained and undisciplined hordes of Dervishes, with no guns. Finally, my proportion of British infantry was low; I had only three battalions, each reduced to the size of half a battalion. On them I relied for victory, both at Kut-al-Amara and at Ctesiphon. My force was considered—and I have no doubt that it was—superior to the Turkish in the open, but there can be no denying that it was dangerously small.

There was every indication that the Allied forces in the Gallipoli theatre had shot their bolt and that the Turks were containing them with no great difficulty, thanks to their excellent defensive position. It was clear that they could now spare troops from their principal theatre in Europe to save Baghdad in their secondary theatre. Besides, a strategic offensive must be kept up to high-water mark in men, guns, stores, munitions, transport, food, etc. We had to advance in a country where the heat is appalling—there is no other word for it—and consequently a constant stream of sick men was being sent down river to overflow the hospitals at Basra and Bombay.

Why did we assume the offensive with a force barely sufficient to hold what we had captured? It was as so often happens in war. Political motives are introduced by a government, and they often override strategical ones. The result when they are allowed to do so is almost always disaster. Had Napoleon not allowed politics to interfere with strategy in 1813, he would have won the war. But he permitted 200,000 of his good troops to remain locked up in northern Spain fighting Wellington in a secondary theatre while he was fighting for existence in his principal theatre.

Now—to resume my story after this digression—I determined to land the 18th Infantry Brigade and the field battery and instal then in the village of Azizieh. Before doing so, however, I received another wire from the M.G.G.S. that: "Everything

points to your having to turn the Turks out of Salman Pak (Ctesiphon) position. Please report from Azizieh whether you propose to concentrate your division, and, if so, where ? Azizieh would be quite suitable from aeroplane point of view as our machines could then visit Baghdad. It is reported that they have already had a most disturbing effect on the enemy. It seems desirable to form an advanced depot wherever you concentrate and return all ships and barges to Kut to refill."

At 9 p.m. on 3rd October, I received an answer from the M.G.G.S. to my telegram of the same date in which I pointed out the necessity of my being given two divisions if I were required to take Baghdad. He observed that I did not appear to take into account the appreciation of the situation by Sir John Nixon as regards the Turkish force, which in all probability would encounter me at Ctesiphon (4,000 bayonets, 500 sabres, and 20 guns) ; that this force was inferior in *moral* and strength to that which I had defeated at Kut-al-Amara. " The position is not nearly as strong. It is the Army Commander's intention to open the way to Baghdad, as he understands that another division will be sent from France. He would like to know your plan of operations for effecting this object with the force you have at Kut-al-Amara, plus four squadrons and a horse artillery battery." There was no longer any doubt that Sir John Nixon had resolved to disregard my warning and thought that my present force, with the addition of four squadrons of cavalry and a battery of horse artillery, was sufficient. There was no chance of the division from France being in time; it had probably not even started. On the other hand, my adversary was certain to be heavily and quickly reinforced by troops from the armies in the Caucasus descending the Tigris *viâ* Mosul.

It seemed to me that it was useless to try to argue any longer. Many generals in the Indian and British armies, who have learnt the science of war in savage warfare against uncivilised and badly armed people, and have not made long study of the great principles of Napoleon and their adaptation by Moltke and later by the French General Staff, would say that Nixon was quite right to try to push me into Baghdad. Sir John Nixon was an excellent Commander-in-Chief for savage wars. He continually told me he had great confidence in my ability and skill—proof of which is that he always gave me the sole conduct and command in battle, and made me draw up the projects or plans of operations, when he had an ample staff for that purpose. When he saw that by warning him I had doubts of success, I am of the opinion that he should have taken command himself and used me under him in the battle.

I replied to the M.G.G.S. the same night, saying that I had certainly taken Sir John Nixon's estimation of the hostile force into consideration, but that my information pointed to a

larger Turkish force at Ctesiphon. However, he had not mentioned the arrival in Mesopotamia of a division from France. I said also that I would wire my project of operations on the morrow as it required careful attention; that I should concentrate at Azizieh; and that the remainder of my force must unite with me there by route march, so that all the ships might be available for supplies and munitions.

My naval flotilla had ceased to exist since the *Shaitan* had failed to pass Baghaila owing to shallow water and the *Comet's* deck plates had worked loose, so that she could not use her 12-pounder gun.

On 3rd October, Sir John Nixon wired to the Government of India—sending a copy to me—that it was probable Nureddin would stand and fight at Salman Pak (Ctesiphon), and that he considered he was strong enough to open the road to Baghdad, and with this intention he intended to concentrate at Azizieh. He continued that families of German and of Turkish officials were said to be leaving Baghdad for Aleppo, and added that it was highly desirable to capture the enemy's steamers, which at this season could not get far up stream of Baghdad.

Telegram to M.G.G.S.:

"4th October, 1915.

"My project of operations is as follows:—

"Preliminary to concentrating whole force at Azizieh I shall instal 18th Brigade there. 16th Brigade with its own land transport at Shidhaif Ash Sharqui bend. 17th Brigade at Shadi. All troops moving by route march. Divisional Troops, including heavy batteries, cavalry, and H.A. battery at Azizieh. With the above dispositions I can unite all my force in a day and a half should enemy move to attack isolated brigade at Azizieh, and at the same time I mystify Nureddin as to my offensive intentions, while I can rapidly advance and unite, should he retreat from Salman Pak on Baghdad. I want 21 days' supplies and ammunition put down at Azizieh for whole force. This 21 days' supplies not to be touched till I move forward by march on Salman Pak.

"My general directing idea will be to turn the enemy's left, i.e., east flank, and rear, only attacking that sector of his position extending from main road to Baghdad inclusive. All his position to the west of main road to be ignored. If he stand again at Diala I treat that in precisely the same way. Column "A" and cavalry would cross the Diala river three miles north of Diala. I shall want all land transport you can get me, as asked for previous to the action at Kut. I trust that, as you have decided on forward move, you are taking all steps to hire camels, donkeys, mahelas, etc.

"After installing Fry's brigade at Azizieh I shall return with the ships to Kut to hasten matters."

On 5th October I disembarked the 18th Infantry Brigade and 63rd Field Battery under General Fry, and installed them at Azizieh village, which is on the left bank of the Tigris. I ordered Fry to make an entrenched camp round the village and also to entrench a battalion at the neck of the loop of the Tigris, four miles below and south-west of Azizieh village. I gave directions for a permanent cavalry post to be stationed one mile up stream of Azizieh and an aerodrome to be started.

I wired to General Delamain, who was commanding at Kut, to send me up twenty-one days' supplies for my whole force, which I should magazine at Azizieh and not touch till I advanced, while I also wanted fourteen days' supplies on ships against Ctesiphon, and as much ammunition as I could get.

I said I wanted my 1,500 casualties at the Battle of Kut-al-Amara made good, and I asked for the same demi-brigade of the 12th Division as I had at that battle as a general reserve, the full brigade to be given me if possible.

I told General Delamain that I should echelon the division by brigades along the river at intervals of one full day's march, so that I could unite my division at any time in a day and a half. Aerial reconnaissance would give me at least that notice before I could be attacked by superior forces, and at the same time the echelon system would mystify Nureddin as to my intentions. If it were decided that we should not advance beyond Kut I could retire in echelon in the same way, and remain practically as united as if I had the whole force in my hand at Azizieh.

To retire with the whole force united *en bloc* would look to the Arabs like a retreat, and for this reason I regarded the keeping of my force echelonned out on the concertina principle as most important.

I decided to make Azizieh my headquarters, as all aerial and other reconnaissance reports would be conveniently to hand there, and because a general commanding should be with his advanced guard in all offensive operations in order to make rapid decisions.

On 5th October, a seaplane reconnoitred Ctesiphon, and reported it unoccupied. The observer said he could see no troops, lighters, or storehouses there, but he thought he saw a column about four miles south of the Diala river going northwards.

I wired for Reilly to verify this report. He took the air at once and returned at 5.30 p.m. to me at Azizieh. He had flown over Ctesiphon at 5 p.m., and he reported that the position was undoubtedly occupied. He saw four large paddle-steamers, lighters, mahelas, storehouses, and at least 3,000 or 4,000 men ; a steamer and two barges with troops on board were at Zeur Bend, about fourteen miles west-north-west of Azizieh ; and he saw tents evidently covered with leaves and

straw. Altogether his report was at direct variance with the seaplane's.

I reported this to the M.G.G.S. and also proposed to G.H.Q. to use the word "Ctesiphon," not "Salman Pak," in telegrams, since the latter was a devoted servant of the Prophet. His tomb is at Ctesiphon, and out of regard for the feelings of Mohammedans I thought it would be better not to make use of his name.

I sent a cavalry reconnaissance to clear up the news about Zeur Bend.

I found that Sir John Nixon's Staff began to order measures, etc., to such an extent that I sent a telegram on 6th October from Azizieh, asking "if the Army Commander is commanding this operation in person, or if he intends me to command, as I did at Kut-al-Amara." The answer—that I was of course to command the Sixth Division as before—seemed to me evasive, for in the previous operations I had commanded more than the Sixth Division.

During my advance from Kut to Azizieh I received the following copies of telegrams of congratulation upon my victory at Kut-al-Amara, sent to me by Sir John Nixon:—

"Army Commander most heartily congratulates you and your division on the decisive result achieved by your plan during the operations. He cannot praise too highly the bold offensive action of General Delamain nor sufficiently express his great admiration of the gallant conduct of his troops."

In repeating the above message of the Commander-in-Chief in Mesopotamia to my troops I added that, throughout the trying time in the battle, owing to the absence of news of Column "A," I had felt quite tranquil in my mind, as I knew the value of the 16th and 17th Infantry Brigades and of all arms composing Column "A." I referred particularly to the magnificent work of the batteries. I also added that it must not be forgotten that the success of Column "A" was made possible by the tenacity and steadiness of Column "B," to which I tendered my grateful thanks. I also thanked the Senior Naval Officer for the gallant and strenuous co-operation of the Royal Navy in the battle and for the constant vigilance of the gunboat crews and their ceaseless watches by night and day—and I deplored the death in action of the gallant Lieutenant-Commander Cookson, R.N.

The following telegram was received by me from the Assistant Military Secretary, I.E.F., "D," dated 1st October, 1915:—

"The Army Commander has much pleasure in forwarding the following message received from Chief General Staff. Begins: 'Thirtieth September S/22912, Chief (i.e., Commander-in-Chief, India) sends you, Townshend, and Delamain and all the forces concerned, his heartiest congratulations on the very successful operations at Kut-al-Amara. He is deeply grieved

to hear your unavoidable losses, and trusts the wounded are all doing well.' "

The King telegraphed to Sir John Nixon, as follows :—

" I warmly congratulate you and my troops under your command upon the marked success which they have achieved under difficult and trying conditions. I trust the sick and wounded are doing well."

Sir John Nixon's reply ran :—

" I present my humble duty to the King and express, on behalf of myself and His Majesty's troops under my command, the deep sense of honour and gratitude with which His Majesty's kind words of appreciation and sympathy have been received here by all ranks. Sick and wounded well and it is hoped many will be back in the ranks shortly. Spirit of troops splendid."

The copy of a telegram from the Viceroy of India to Sir John Nixon was also forwarded to me at the same time : " I warmly congratulate you on the great success of the operations at Kut-al-Amara. Please express to General Townshend and all officers and men under his command my very warm appreciation of their courage and devotion, which have secured so striking a success. I trust the wounded are doing well and have every comfort that is possible under existing difficult conditions."

The following copy of a reply to H.E. the Viceroy from Sir John Nixon was attached :—" Your Excellency's kind congratulations are highly appreciated by all, and, on behalf of General Townshend and the troops under his command, I beg to offer our warmest thanks for your inspiriting words. Am glad to say wounded are doing well and it is expected that a certain number will recover here and rejoin ranks."

I should like to mention here an act of generosity to me by Sir John Nixon. On 7th October he received the following telegram through the Viceroy of India, from the Secretary of State for India, with regard to the victory of Kut-al-Amara :—

" I much regret to learn of the loss of Lieut.-Commander Cookson. Will you kindly convey to General Sir John Nixon my congratulations on the further brilliant success which has been achieved by force ' D '."

Sir John Nixon sent the following reply to the Viceroy :—

" I shall be very glad if you will kindly communicate the following telegram to Secretary of State :—

' Your kind and inspiriting message of thirtieth was delayed and only received to-day, and, on behalf of General Townshend and the Sixth Division, to whom full credit for the victory belongs, I desire to say how deeply it is appreciated by them and me.' "

At the same time I received a wire from the M.G.G.S. from Kut to say that from a statement in the House of Commons it would appear that the Cabinet acquiesced in the pursuit—

though what the House of Commons had to do with my tactical pursuit after a victory I could not make out.

The cavalry reconnaissance to Zeur, fourteen miles up river of Azizieh and an equal distance below Ctesiphon, established the fact that Nureddin had pushed forward a detachment of security to Zeur. Here it was entrenched. Its strength was reported to be one regiment of Turkish cavalry, three battalions of infantry and two field guns. This mixed detachment was installed some two miles inland from the river bank north-east of Zeur. As two steamers were moored to the bank, I supposed it was on covering service for the main body, in position at Ctesiphon, and would retire when I advanced in force.

In consequence of this report I ordered Generals Delamain and Hoghton to unite their brigades with the 18th Brigade at Azizieh as soon as possible so as to be prepared for all eventualities.

This Turkish covering force corresponded with the information of the secret service that Nureddin had called in a Turkish detachment from Hilla, which he might have done with advantage prior to the Battle of Kut-al-Amara.

APPENDIX PART II

PROJECT OF OPERATIONS FOR THE BATTLE OF KUT-AL-AMARA.

To M.G.G.S., General Headquarters, Basra, 28th August, 1915.

With reference to instructions for my advance on Kut-al-Amara, dated G.H.Q., I.E.F., " D," Basra, 23rd August, 1915, para. 5, sub-para. A, and the Intelligence Report also, given me by General Headquarters, I have the honour to submit the following project of operations for carrying out my mission :

(1) As soon as I have occupied Sheikh Saad with the 17th Infantry Brigade, which would go straight through from Amarah, I should at once unite the 16th Inf. Brigade, now at Ali-al-Gharbi, with it, and should unite the 18th Inf. Brigade from Amarah with the above and the remainder of the Division.

(2) I should not advance from Sheikh Saad on Kut-al-Amara until my force is entirely united at Sheikh Saad.

(3) Unless any important information be received, either by Intelligence reports or aerial reconnaissance, necessitating an alteration of my project of operations, I should march the whole of my force united on the left bank of the Tigris from Sheikh Saad in about three easy marches to Kut-al-Amara ; owing to the great heat marching from 4 a.m. to 8 a.m., and resting all day. The march would be in a single column and consist of the cavalry, infantry and Divisional troops, less the heavy batteries and 5th Hants Howitzer battery by ship transport.

The halt and bivouac for the force would be alongside the ships and gunboat flotilla, which would ensure the security of the bivouac as far as the river was concerned.

Preconceived Manœuvre.

(4) As the enemy divided their forces, according to all reports with an impassable river between them, having their left wing on the left bank and their right wing on the right bank, I shall destroy their left wing by means of my whole force united, ignoring their force on the right bank, which will inevitably fly when it sees its left wing rolled up. I select the left wing of the enemy for destruction as that flank is nearest the enemy's line of retreat. (See rough sketch attached which shows the manœuvre I have in my mind, i.e., a turning attack by my Principal Mass, which will deliver a decisive attack against the enemy's left flank and rear).* A battery of field artillery will accompany this attack, and also the cavalry, echelonned on the exterior flank.

(5) The Preparatory Attack will comprise one infantry brigade moving along the left bank on a front of some 1,000 yards, supported by the whole of the divisional artillery—the 4-inch and 5-inch guns being disembarked from the barges and installed on the left bank. (The banks are now high up above the river).

(6) The preparatory attack will not be made a decisive one until it is seen that the Turning or Decisive attack is closing on the river.† I should have a distance of roughly three miles between the decisive and preparatory attacks, i.e., effective field artillery range.

(7) As I have said, the above project is the principle I have in my mind to apply, which I shall carry out unless some weighty reason or obstacle appears to alter or modify it.

* This is exactly what happened in the battle.

† It would have been more clear had I said *moving down* on the river, i.e., when it was rolling up the enemy's left flank and driving all before it.

I believe the reason why the enemy have made their right flank so strong is that they fear a strategic turning movement from Nasiriyeh, and that in consequence I shall come by the right bank; or else they believe the British are wedded to frontal attacks, since they have seen hardly anything else in the campaign.

All the reports say that the left bank is perfectly open, favourable for manœuvre, no obstacles, but I shall thoroughly test these reports.

(8) I was informed to-day, on my arrival at Amarah from Basra, that no P-class steamer can go more than 15 miles beyond Ali-al-Gharbi—this, on the authority of Mr. Cowley. This is a serious thing, in view of one of the Lynch steamers being required to be held in readiness at Basra for the Karun river if necessity arise. I felt bound to wire you this, as Mr. Cowley knows his river.

(9) With regard to sub-para. (b) of para. 52 the aircraft commander will be in close touch with me and my plan of operations. His closest attention will be invited to reconnoitring the enemy's left flank and rear, in view of my preconceived manœuvre indicated above. Section 95 F.S. Regulation Part I, paras. 2, 3, 4, will be kept in mind. Paras. 6, 7, 8* are noted; I will write you separately on the subject of defensive posts on my line of communications. I shall cut down the numbers of one post already proposed at Ali-al-Gharbi. I find that the garrison of a small post on the Line of Communication is put down as one battalion—a half company is more what I want. I will write further on this subject.

(10) Intelligence news was given me to-day, on my arrival here, in which it is indicated that 12 battalions of Turkish troops have arrived at Mosul " from the Van districts and from the S.W. of Erzroum," and are about to be despatched on skin rafts (Killiks) to Baghdad. The letter is dated 27 Ramazan.

If this is true they should be at Baghdad by now. Needless for me to remark to you how unlikely it is that Turkish troops in the zone in which they are fighting the Russians, where the Ottoman troops have just suffered a defeat, should be diverted to Mesopotamia. Still one does not know what the Turks will do or not do, and it may be taken for certain that Nureddin is making frantic appeals for help to hold Baghdad. What do you think of this? If another 6,000 combatants are added to 6,000 already in position at Sinn position, I should have to attack markedly superior numbers in a strong position.

C. V. F. TOWNSHEND,
Major-General.

Amarah.
28th August, 1915.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE ABOVE PROJECT.

It may possibly be of interest to my military readers to explain my tactics in detail.

It will be seen, on reference to the Introduction of this book, that my plan of battle was the application of the principle of the Mass against the enemy's weakest point. At the same time my minimum force is used to pin the adversary in front, whilst liberty of action and manœuvre enables my Principal Mass to be moved on to the enemy's left flank and rear, where it will fall on the enemy and automatically roll up the left wing of the enemy. The enemy's right wing on the right bank of the river would not stay when they saw their left wing destroyed. In accordance with this predetermined plan, I grouped my force into :—

A. The Principal Mass—Brigadier-General Delamain.
B. Minimum Force—Major-General Fry.

The Principal Mass, or " A " Column, comprised the 16th and 17th Infantry Brigades, a proportion of mobile artillery, including the howitzer battery (for clearing trenches of the enemy), and the bulk of the cavalry, which would operate on principle always on the exterior flank of the Principal Mass. This would be used as a hammer blow against the enemy's weakest point—that flank of the hostile force which lay nearest its natural line of retreat. This was the road from Kut to Baghdad, which ran along the left bank of the Tigris, and therefore I knew I should find the bulk of the hostile force on that bank. Thus it was indicated that I should operate on the left

* Of general instructions to me by M.G.G.S.

bank, for the first of the fundamental principles of war is that our primary objective should always be the bulk of the hostile forces in the field. In order to use my Principal Mass in a turning movement against the enemy's flank, my manœuvre would be a predetermined one. All the land transport available I therefore allotted to "A" Column, which would have to make a wide sweeping turning manœuvre into the desert in order to gain the extreme flank and rear of Nureddin's entrenched position at Essinn. By far the greater portion of his redoubts and entrenchments was on the left bank; and, as the *rôle* of the turning, or principal, attack was the most important, I put my best brigadier in command of "A" Column.

The Minimum Force, or "B" Column, for which I had no land transport to speak of, and which therefore would always be transported in ships, until it should arrive within striking distance of the enemy, comprised the 18th Infantry Brigade under Major-General Fry, together with the bulk of the artillery and all the heavy artillery, and the bulk of the engineers and sappers and miners, so as to give the Minimum Force great defensive power. This force I should use to attack the enemy's position frontally, in order to pin him to his ground and hold him in his entrenchments whilst my Principal Mass executed a wide turning manœuvre into the desert and would be drawn round on to the enemy's rear and extreme flank—as one hauls in a fishing net.

The Minimum Force would proceed along the river bank and start the battle, by delivering the frontal attack against that wing of the enemy which rested on the river in its entrenchments. But it would not make its attack a decisive one, until I ordered it, which would be when the Principal Mass became closely engaged. Until that moment, the action of the minimum force would be characterised by a defensive character, with powerful artillery and a plentiful supply of picks and spades and entrenching tools. All natural obstacles of the terrain, such as water-courses and nullahs, irrigation channels, etc., would be taken advantage of, and all captured localities utilised as defences. It was probable also, I thought, that Nureddin would not expect a wide turning manœuvre round his flank and rear, as up to this time the Turks had invariably experienced purely frontal attacks by the British. This surmise proved correct; Nureddin expected the usual attack frontally along both banks of the river.

After the battle had been well commenced by the Minimum Force, the Principal Mass or Turning Attack, Column "A," would be drawing near the enemy's flank and rear, with the bulk of the cavalry working on the exterior flank of the attack and menacing the line of retreat of the enemy. And the shock of the Principal Mass in the battle would be the signal for everyone in the whole force to advance and engage on the whole battle front.

The Naval Flotilla on the river would assist with its action the progress of the Minimum Force and deal with any hostile artillery on the right bank. I considered that I was certain to find that Nureddin would have detached a fraction of his forces to the right bank. This I should keep in check, and at the same time protect my transports and shipping, by a detachment borrowed from Gorringe's 12th Division, which now were used as line of communication troops. I managed to get two weak battalions of these troops, under Colonel Climo, out of Army Headquarters for this purpose. The action of this detachment I decided should be the "passive defensive," entrenched on the right bank on the water's edge, and connected with the remainder of my force by a boat-bridge across the river.

Secret.

Head Quarters, 6th Division.
September 22nd, 1915.

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS TO G.O.C.'S BRIGADES, HEADS OF DEPARTMENTS, S.N.O., ETC.

The general principles of Sections 102, 103, Field Service Regulations Part 1, 1099 (reprint 1914) are embodied in my plan or, rather, project of attack. The Units for which I an waiting :—

The whole of the 63rd Battery R.F.A., and Hants Howitzer Battery will have arrived by the 25th, and also the 16th Cavalry.

1.—ADVANCE.

On the 26th the advance to the battle-field will be carried out as follows :—

16th Infantry Brigade.
17th Infantry Brigade.
30th Infantry Brigade (less 2 Battalions).
2 Batteries R.F.A. (10th Bde. R.F.A. less 1 Battery)
1 Maxim Battery.
Divl. Ammtn. Col. (land Section).
2 Secns. Brit. Field Amb.
6 Secns. Ind. Field Amb.
1/5th Hants Howitzer (less ½ Battery)
7th Lancers.
16th Cavalry.
No. 22 Co. S. & M.

"A" Column under General Delamain will march at 4.30 p.m. and move on the Chahela Bend, *viâ* the right bank, covered by its tactical advanced guard and by protective cavalry, which will instal itself at the Mounds in the Chahela Bend—the column bivouacking (with ½ F.S. Scale of Tents) opposite the village of Nakhailat—the attendant ships banking into the right bank.

18th Infantry Brigade.
17th Co. S. & M.
Divisional Artillery.
Divisional Ammunition Col. (River Section).
Secn. Brit. & 2 Ind. F.A.

"B" Column, under General Fry, on ships (except 63rd Battery R.F.A., half of 1/5th Hants Howitzer Battery and 48th Pioneers, who go by the left bank) will move to Nakhailat and disembark on the left bank south of village, vessels banking into the left bank.

2.—DEPLOYMENT FOR ACTION.

"B" Column will then advance towards the enemy along the left bank in order to instal itself within the following distances of the enemy's troops, entrenched on the left bank :—

(1) For 4.5 inch guns ... 5,000 yards.
(2) ,, 2.4 inch guns ... 4,500 ,,
(3) ,, 1 Battery R.F.A. (Howitzer Battery). 3,500 ,,

All guns on left bank of the river to support "B" Column—it is my intention to instal them in position in—
(3) Square E 5. 9. 9.
(2) ,, F 5. 2. 7.
(1) ,, F 5. 3. 5.

From these positions the guns will be able to support the infantry attack of the Preparatory Attack, "B" Column, without changing position at effective ranges.

The Naval Flotilla guns to support also the attack of "B" Column by covering fire directed to subdue that of any Turkish guns which may be entrenched south of the Tigris.

The advance of "B" Column will be in the open, over ground exposed to the fire of probably the whole of the Turkish artillery firing at known ranges. It would be an expensive advance if carried out in daylight. Therefore a night advance is indicated (night of 26th/27th) and trenches must be dug in the darkness.

The advance of "B" Column in its initial stages may have to be assisted by field guns of "A" Column, entrenched on Chahela Mounds, and the heavy guns moored in the Nakhailat Reach.

In the meanwhile the Boat Bridge is being constructed with the utmost rapidity, and G.O.C. "A" Column will demonstrate * with a mixed detachment towards the Essinn entrenchments on the right bank and will select and establish entrenched posts covering the bridge and ships, leaving as garrison the 30th demi-brigade, which ultimately becomes a general reserve at the disposal of the G.O.C. the Force. Six Nordenfelt guns will be allotted to these posts.

* I hoped by this demonstration to make my adversary believe I was going to divide my forces, and attack on both banks. The trick succeeded.

It is believed that the bridge will be ready by the night of the 26th, and as soon as it is ready the crossing of " A " Column to the left bank will commence. They will leave their tents standing on the right bank and the operation will be covered by the mixed detachment and guns on Chahela Mounds.

Having crossed, " A " Column will rest east of Nakhailat village till dusk. I should have mentioned above that a mixed detachment (1 battn., 1 section, R.F.A. ; troop of cavalry) from " A " Column will march by the left bank as a flank guard to " B " Column in ships, and, on arrival at Nakhailat, this detachment will march north to Square F 4 to entrench itself and so hold the mouth of the defile between the Suwada and Suwechi marshes and act as advanced guard to " A " Column.

" A " Column will make a night advance to Square F 4. 1. 2 to the mouth of the defile.*

3.—PREPARATORY ATTACK.

On the 27th, at daybreak, the action will be seriously begun by " B " Column, under General Fry, whose object is a deliberate advance on the enemy's position on the left bank, Squares 6D and 5D, assisted and pushed by artillery support and the spade and entrenching tool. His *rôle* is not only to pin the enemy in his position and hold him, but, by display and ruse and large extension of front (1,200 yards for example) to endeavour to make him believe that this is the Principal Decisive Attack and so induce the enemy to use up Reserves to defend this section of the line.

General Fry will strengthen with the spade all localities won, and will utilise all dry water-courses, cuts in the terrain, etc., natural and artificial, with all the art of the engineer. His command and *rôle* is quite an independent one, and the conduct of the Preparatory Attack demands coolness and self-sacrifice.

As soon as he learns that the Principal Decisive Attack, " A " Column, has taken the hostile entrenchments holding the defile Square 3D and 3E, by the collar, General Fry will change his Preparatory Attack into a **Decisive** one.

4.—PRINCIPAL DECISIVE ATTACK.

" A " Column, under General Delamain, will move forward to the attack an hour or so after the Preparatory Attack has commenced, with the object of enveloping and carrying the hostile entrenchments 3D and 3E by assault. His attack is the embodiment of the principle of the Mass—striking the enemy's weakest point with the greatest possible numbers, his troops to be echelonned out on the exterior flank with the above intention and the bulk of his cavalry moving on his extreme exterior flank.

Having carried the entrenchments, General Delamain will advance rapidly south against the enemy's left flank and rear, hitting off the river at Squares 5 B. and 5 C.

It is thought that the enemy's right wing on the right bank will no longer stay when it is seen that their left wing on the left bank is retreating, which they must do precipitately when they see the turning attack descending on them.

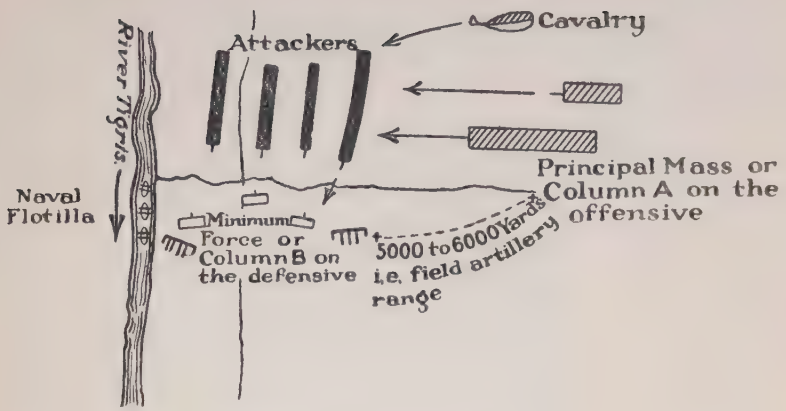
General Delamain's attack should be as unexpected as possible under the conditions of this absolutely flat desert country devoid of cover. I have given him the greatest possible strength. I have no other mobile guns to give him, only two batteries. The remainder must be relegated to the Preparatory Attack (Minimum Force) which on principle must be given the bulk of the Artillery.

AIR SERVICE

This will work under the direct orders of Divisional Head-Quarters, and special instructions will be issued to the Flight Commander regarding :—

(*a*) Reconnaissance.
(*b*) Observation of artillery fire.
(*c*) Use of bombs in rear of the enemy.

* This defile is the avenue of approach between the Suwada and Ataba marshes.


River Tigris
Attackers
Cavalry
Principal Mass or Column A on the offensive
Naval Flotilla
Minimum Force or Column B on the defensive
5000 to 6000 Yards i.e. field artillery range

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS No. 2

IN THE CASE OF VICTORY AND PURSUIT

Secret.

1. "In the pursuit all manœuvres are good," said Marshal Saxe. The pursuit will be continued by day and night without regard to the exhaustion of men or horses, as long as the enemy's forces remain in the field.

"All pursuing troops must act with the greatest boldness and be prepared to accept risks which would not be justifiable at other times." (F.S. Regns., Part I., Secn. 112).*

2. We shall have to carry out a Tactical Pursuit, i.e., a simple following-up in the flotilla and sending of cavalry and machine-guns by a rapid march by the Baghdad road, parallel with the enemy's line of retreat along the river and on the river, in order to forestall him at defiles, and to put him between two fires and surround him if possible.

In this pursuit, the Naval flotilla has largely to take the *rôle* of the cavalry, and in the same way infantry has to support it. The infantry, being conveyed in ships, will be able to turn the enemy's rearguard troops out of the defended localities whence the gunboats and cavalry are unable to dislodge them.

A Strategic Pursuit, which is directed across the retreating enemy's line of communications, taking a wide sweep, is not possible owing to conditions of this expedition, in which we are practically tied to our ships.

3. To menace the enemy's line of retreat will give him the greatest anxiety, for his only safety is in retreat; thus the pursuer must constantly endeavour to gain the flank of the retreating columns, or at least of their rearguard.

The enemy must be kept on the run. He should be shelled at night, so as to cause panic and confusion in his ranks. Even the opening of fire at random with artillery in the night in the direction of the localities where you think the pursued are trying to snatch some rest causes demoralisation, and, perhaps, panic and a disorderly flight.

The cavalry and machine-guns must abandon all frontal pursuit to the other arms, and must strain every nerve in a pursuit parallel with the line of retreat of the enemy, i.e., along the road to Baghdad (on the left bank), which is shorter than the river and cuts off many loops and bends. They must endeavour to forestall the fleeing enemy at defiles, etc.

The Flotilla gunboats and Column "B" will follow in direct pursuit, whilst the cavalry pursues laterally as stated above, endeavouring to head them off, always acting against the enemy's flank.

* I sometimes quoted the F.S. Regulations, for the latest editions had not reached all the troops in India when war broke out, though the Staff had received the book.

4. DISTRIBUTION OF PURSUING COLUMN IN SHIPS ("B" COLUMN).

G.O.C. Division accompanies "B" Column with
A.D.C.
G.S.O. I.
G.S.O. II.
G.S.O. III.
A.Q.M.G.
B.G.H.A.

The remainder Divisional Staff are then attached to General Delamain.

"B" COLUMN IN SHIPS.

Julnar.	One battalion—less horses and M.G. mules.
24. 7.	½ Company Sappers and Miners.
	One Section Indian Field Ambulance.
	Two guns ready for rapid disembarkation, horses, with all possible wagons.
	24. Battery vehicles. 7. ½ Battery horses.
Blosse Lynch.	Two guns in action in bows—224 rounds per gun.
6. Oil.	18th Brigade Headquarters.
	One battalion—12 machine-gun mules.
	One Section British Field Ambulance.
	6. ½ Battery horses. Oil.
Mejidieh.	Two guns in action in bows—224 rounds per gun
32. 22.	Divisional Headquarters (less part staff) and one Infantry battalion.
	22. G.O.C.'s horses, plus M.G. mules on *Julnar*, *Mejidieh*, and *Mosul*.
	32. 1½ Double Companies Infantry.
Mosul.	2½ Double Companies Infantry.
28. 29.	One Section Indian Field Ambulance.
	29. R.E. stores and explosives.
	28. R.E stores and 18-pr. ammunition.

Horses Infantry Battalion limited to three per Regt.

5. General Delamain with Column "A" will follow with his ships by route march on the left bank.

I shall leave the 30th demi-brigade in occupation of Kut-al-Amara in the enemy's position on left bank.

Attached to Column "A."
Divisional Artillery (less 1 Field Battery).
Divisional Ammunition Column.
Air Service (Military and Naval).
Divisional Supply Column.
Field Ambulance.
Engineer Park.

The Air Service will work with Column "A," coming forward to help the pursuing column, i.e., Column "B."

6. The Column of pursuit, i.e., Column "B," will be organised from the moment that the G.O.C. has no more doubt that the enemy are retreating.

As soon as the Column of Pursuit is ready, it will be embarked in the ships allotted as above, and the O.C. Cavalry will be given his instructions and transports, his line of action in pursuit being based on the lateral pursuit by the Baghdad road. He must keep in communication as long as possible with the ships of the Pursuing Column. His command of necessity will be largely an independent one, but his aim should be to co-operate with the Pursuing Column in the ships.

The O.C. Cavalry will be prepared to send on a contact squadron far afield—say 30 to 40 miles—in order to carry out some special task should the G.O.C. Division order it. The G.O.C. Division will indicate to the O.C. Column "A" the successive points he reaches in the pursuit.

He will make known the points where prisoners are to be sent.

7. Scant mercy should be shown to enemy who refuse to lay down their arms, and the Arabs, if hostile, must be terrorised into giving information and bringing in supplies should the troops require it.

PART III—CTESIPHON

CHAPTER VIII

PREPARATIONS FOR THE ADVANCE ON BAGHDAD

General Delamain's command, which consisted of the 16th Infantry Brigade, 3 field batteries, Maxim battery, 22nd Co. Sappers and Miners, and half the Divisional Ammunition Column, joined me at Azizieh on 9th October. Hoghton, doing double marches, was due on the 11th.

Delamain's brigade mustered but 1,508 combatants, of whom the Dorsets numbered only 297. In the course of conversation with me in my quarters at Azizieh, Delamain told me that his Indian troops were not what they had been before the battle of Kut-al-Amara. He said that when he assaulted the northern trenches of the hostile position in that battle he found some of his Indian troops without spirit, though one battalion did very well, losing 45 per cent. of its numbers in the assault. He added that he was convinced that, if they had to assault solidly held trenches again, his troops would not succeed. They were worn out and needed rest. They knew that the distance from Azizieh to the sea was over 300 miles, and they were beginning to wonder what was to be the end of it all.

"This is not pleasant hearing," I comment in my diary, "but it is true. The British troops can be relied on as before, but the Indians are now shaken and unreliable."

About the end of October, Indian recruits at last began to arrive to fill up the ranks of the Sixth Division. I have never seen such a wretched class of recruits in the whole of my Indian experience, and the battalion commanders did not mince their words in the matter. There were also troubles as regards the Mohammedan element in the Indian troops at this time. There existed a widespread spirit of unwillingness to advance against the Holy Place of Salman Pak, the tomb of a devoted servant of the Prophet, at Ctesiphon. In this connection I had to send back to Basra one Indian battalion, composed in the bulk of trans-Border men of the North-west of India, owing to numerous cases of desertion to the enemy. It was a danger to my force, and I declined to have it any longer in my command.

It cost me a lot to come to this decision, seeing that at the most I should be unable to bring more than 8,600 bayonets into the field for battle. When I moved forward my force would muster some 14,000 combatants all told, but these figures included artillerymen, engineers, wireless telegraphy men, sailors, signal company men, and so forth. But it was on the infantry that I relied to win the battle.

From Azizieh I made repeated efforts to induce Headquarters at Basra to send back to my battalions the scores of British soldiers, of the Norfolks, Dorsets, and Oxfords, who were employed in every imaginable kind of billet in Basra—as police in the city, extra clerks, batmen for officers (including staff officers of the Indian Army, who were not entitled to British soldiers as servants), improvised chauffeurs for a regular fleet of motor launches, marines on gunboats, extra hands to strengthen crews of reservist bluejackets—all taken from the bayonets of my division ! But, in spite of the most strenuous efforts, I managed to get back very few of those thus employed.

My three British battalions were the backbone of my division. I relied on them for victory—and they were at a strength of less than half a battalion each. To add to my troubles, beriberi broke out at Azizieh, carrying off about forty of my British soldiers.

My experiences in this campaign have convinced me that the proportion of one British battalion to three Indian ones per brigade of an Indian division of three brigades is dangerous in warfare under modern conditions with a civilised enemy organised, trained, and armed as well as we are. Such a proportion may be fully successful against uncivilised tribesmen or savages, ill-organised and without artillery ; it may even suit war conditions generally in India. But to have to assault strong positions held by the most tenacious of all soldiers in Europe or Asia when on the defensive and in entrenchments—the Turk—required a proportion of two British battalions to two Indian in each brigade. I suggest that a far better system than the present one would be to have three homogeneous brigades in a division—one all-British brigade of four British battalions under a British service brigadier-general, and two Indian brigades of four Indian battalions each under Indian service brigadiers. To my mind this is a far better arrangement in every way for times of both peace and war in India—that is to say, if the Indian budget cannot afford such an establishment as a proportion of two British battalions and two Indian ones in each brigade.

On 9th October I received an assurance from G.H.Q., that I should be equipped with first and second-line transport complete—that is, the Sixth Division and cavalry brigade supply columns complete. This was in answer to my demands.

On 10th October, I had a telegram from the M.G.G.S.

from which I inferred that sanction had not been received by the Government of India from home with regard to my advance on Baghdad, and at the same time made it clear to me that my warnings, as to reinforcements being necessary if I had to take Baghdad, were being considered. "Following received from Viceroy, dated 10th October, to Sir John Nixon: 'The Secretary of State wires that he hopes to give me definite information as to reinforcements, and that meanwhile you should retain your present position, and be prepared to advance if reinforcements asked for can be sent you. He asks me to instruct you accordingly. Please regard this as official instruction. I hope very much that the required troops will be forthcoming and that advance will not be much delayed.' Ends. The Army Commander has replied as follows: Begins: 'Your Excellency's wire of 10th has been communicated at once to General Townshend, who may be trusted not to commit himself without absolute military necessity.' Ends." (This last sentence made it clear that I was an independent commander, and would be held responsible). The M.G.G.S went on to say that perhaps, in view of the above, I might think it advisable to echelon Hoghton's brigade back to Shidaif or some other suitable point in rear of me on the river, and to place a 15-pounder gun post there, for, he said, if the present situation were prolonged, the enemy's horse might come round my flank and cut the river communication.

I answered, asking if the Viceroy's remark about "present situation" meant Kut-al-Amara or Azizieh. "If it means Kut, then we are too far forward at Azizieh. If the present situation means Azizieh, then I shall first endeavour to destroy the hostile mixed detachment at Zeur by surprise, and then *solidly* retrench Azizieh camp. (It was then only lightly entrenched for precaution's sake). If the Viceroy means Kut, and I am ordered to withdraw from Azizieh, my first step in retirement will be again to destroy the enemy's detachment of security at Zeur. I shall not echelon Hoghton's brigade down river until I have attacked the hostile detachment at Zeur." (Hoghton's brigade had just joined me). I ended by hoping that the drafts of recruits were on their way, and by asking what Sir John Nixon's opinion was on the report of my political officer, Leachman, who stated that the Anizeh and Shammar Arabs, who numbered thousands of fighting men and whose example had great political influence with other Arab tribes, had just entered the contest on the side of the Turks.

In addition to the rough entrenchments at Azizieh I had thrown a pontoon bridge across the Tigris opposite the village, and had entrenched a post south of Azizieh at the bend of the river on the right bank at Frazer's Post, four miles away. It was garrisoned by a battalion, as I considered that the enemy's

cavalry might establish some guns there and incommode the shipping.

By 11th October, I had ascertained that the Turkish force at Ctesiphon was of roughly my own numbers, and that Nureddin Pacha was still in command. His force *de couverture* at Zeur—twelve to fourteen miles north of Azizieh—consisted of about 4,000 men. This force had again pushed forward a light detachment of some 1,500 camel corps, 1,000 sabres and 4 guns to El Kutunie, and constant skirmishing took place between my cavalry and the Turks, who were assisted by considerable numbers of Arab horsemen. As such an enterprise would improve the *moral* of my many raw and untrained Indian recruits, who now unfortunately formed the great bulk of the units in the Sixth Division, I had decided to endeavour to surprise and destroy this hostile detachment, by means of a night march. By 27th October, I considered that they had grown sufficiently confident and careless at El Kutunie, where they were hutted at the edge of a very large wood on the bank of the river, and accordingly I issued operation orders for a march that night against the Turkish post.

Leaving a minimum force of two battalions at Azizieh to ensure the security of the camp, I took a north-westerly course into the desert, and then changed direction to the south when abreast of El Kutunie. It was a clear, starlight night, and the march was carried out under very good conditions. In fact, it was the best I have ever been on as regards march discipline, silence, and absolute obedience to orders. It was also by far the most important as regards numbers I had been with or commanded hitherto, for my division and the cavalry brigade numbered some 12,000* men on this occasion, and I marched in two parallel columns so as to give more rapid deployment for action.

My experience of night marches on active service up to this one had impressed me with the truth of Napier's saying that night marches are seldom happy. I took part in the night march on the Nile after the battle of Abu Klea, in Sir Herbert Stewart's desert column of 1,500 men in January, 1885; and I can truthfully say it was the worst conducted march I have ever been on. I was also in a difficult night march in the desert with my battalion, supporting the cavalry of Burn Murdoch before the action at Firket on the Nile, in 1896.

On this march I completely surprised the enemy's camp. I moved forward at first glimpse of light from the position of deployment, straight against the hostile camp at El Kutunie, with the principal mass, using one infantry and one cavalry brigade to turn the enemy's northern flank and menace his

* The reason I took such a large force for this operation against only 1500 cavalry was that I considered that this mounted force might be a bait to draw me on, and that Nureddin might attack me in the midst of my action with his whole force. I was not going to run needless risks.

line of retreat to the northward. We soon saw lights moving hastily about in the enemy's camp. Sabri Bey, the Turkish commander, was evidently completely surprised. The enemy opened fire with their light camel corps guns, the first shell of which very nearly got me and my G.S.O., I., Colonel Evans. We continued our advance, and the enemy fled northward. Had our cavalry charged, the enemy's cavalry and camel corps and guns must have been either destroyed or captured. However, Brigadier-General Roberts, in command of the cavalry brigade, assured me that most unfortunately the terrain on our extreme right was absolutely impossible to charge over, and thus the enemy got away with impunity. Our aeroplanes watched them in their flight through Zeur, and well on the road to Ctesiphon.

After burning the camp at El Kutunie and blowing up the fortified house there, I marched back to Azizieh, annoyed at missing the guns and at the escape of the enemy, but content with the moral effect of the operation on my raw recruits, and on the Arabs on both sides of the Tigris.

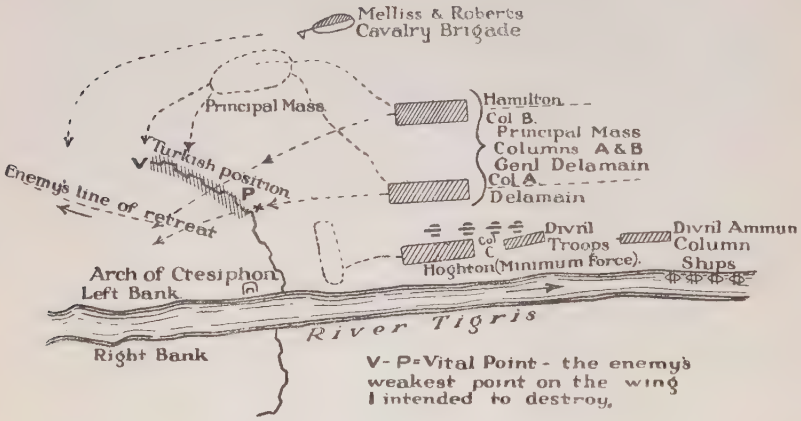
A great source of anxiety to me at this time was the safeguarding of the convoys of ships, with barges. The Arabs were actively hostile on both banks up river of Azizieh and brought heavy rifle fire to bear on ships rounding awkward bends and narrow shoal channels in the river. Throughout my operations it will be observed that I had to disseminate troops to hold river defiles, in the same way as in mountain warfare on the North-West Frontier in India one had to disseminate a serious fraction of one's fighting force to safeguard the passage of one's supply convoys through mountain defiles and passes.

Before advancing from Azizieh I had grouped my force for fighting (as well as marching) in the same way as I had previously to the battle of Kut-al-Amara, but into three columns instead of two. The cavalry also formed a flying column, which was to be strengthened by a selected infantry battalion as a support—to be transported in carts, if available—and a pack wireless set was added.

The Principal Mass for the hammer blow would be formed to either wing required by the uniting together of any two of Columns A, B, or C. The third column would form the Minimum Force to curtain that wing of the enemy which was to be held and pinned to its ground, while with the Principal Mass I broke the extreme flank and rear of the opposite wing. The following sketch shows the manner in which I determined to apply the Principal Mass on the enemy's weakest point at the battle of Ctesiphon.

By predetermined manœuvre the enemy's right wing, resting on the river bank, was to be pinned and held by Column C (Hoghton) with the bulk of the artillery to assist him, while

the left flank and rear of the Turks—that nearest their line of retreat—was to be overwhelmed by the Principal Mass, consisting of Columns A and B, under Delamain and Hamilton.



The Turkish position on the right bank was to be ignored, except by the naval flotilla with their guns. In short, the plan of the battle was much the same as that of the Battle of Kut-al-Amara.

The troops detailed to the various columns were:

PRINCIPAL MASS.

Column A.	16th Infy. Brigade.
Major-General Delamain, Commanding 16th Inf. Brigade.	Half 30th Infy. Brigade. 82nd Batty., R.F.A. Half 22nd Company of Sappers and Miners. 2 British and 3 Indian Sections Field Ambulance.
Column B.	18th Infy. Brigade.
Brig.-Gen. Hamilton, Commanding 18th Inf. Brigade.	63rd Batty., R.F.A. Half 22nd Company Sappers and Miners. 1 British and 3 Indian Sections Field Ambulance.
Column C.	17th Infy. Brigade.
Brig.-Gen. Hoghton. Commanding 17th Inf. Brigade.	Half 17th Company Sappers and Miners. 1 British and 2 Indian Sections Field Ambulance.

To manœuvre on exterior flank of Principal Mass.	
Flying Column.* Major-Gen. Sir Charles Melliss,† Commanding 30th Inf. Brigade.	Cavalry Brigade (Brig.-General Roberts), including S battery, R.H.A. 76th Punjabis (Infantry) with 61 carts. Cavalry Brigade Ammunition Column. Maxim battery. 1 Pack Wireless set.

Order of Battle of the Infantry Brigades of the Sixth Division, reinforced by the 30th Brigade (less one battalion).

16th Infantry Brigade. Major-General W. S. Delamain, C.B., D.S.O., commanding :—
- 2nd Battalion Dorset Regiment.
- 66th Punjabis (replacing the 20th Punjab Infantry).
- 117th Mahrattas.
- 104th Rifles.

17th Infantry Brigade. Brig.-General F. A. Hoghton commanding :—
- 1st Battalion Oxford & Bucks Light Infantry.
- 22nd Punjabis.
- 103rd Mahrattas.
- 119th Infantry.

18th Infantry Brigade. Brig.-General W. G. Hamilton, C.B., D.S.O., commanding :—
- 2nd Battalion Norfolk Regiment.
- 110th Mahrattas.
- 120th Infantry.
- 7th Rajputs.

30th Brigade (less 1 battalion). Major-General Sir Charles J. Melliss, V.C., K.C.B., commanding :—
- 76th Punjabis.
- 24th Punjabis (less ½ battalion left behind at Post of Azizieh on L. of C.).
- 2/7th Gurkha Rifles.

Cavalry Brigade. Brig.-General H. L. Roberts commanding :—
- 7th Hariana Lancers.
- 16th Cavalry.
- 33rd Cavalry (less 1 squadron as 6th Divisional Squadron).
- S. Battery R.H.A.

* After the battle was won, the Flying Column, under Melliss, would follow the beaten enemy into Baghdad, while the naval flotilla did the same work by river.

† Sir Charles Melliss commanded the 30th Brigade, forming part of General Gorringes's Division, on the line of communications; I had specially asked for him to command this Flying Column. I counted on his well-known energy and distinguished bravery to make it do the work of two, in holding off possible counter-attacks by the Turks in the battle, or, if none were made, to come down like a thunder-bolt on their rear.

Divisional Troops, comprising :—
10th Brigade R.F.A. (less 2 batteries).
1/5th Hants Howitzer battery.
Heavy battery—two 5-inch cow guns.
Divisional Ammunition Column.
1 Squadron 33rd Cavalry (Divisional Cavalry).
½ 17th Company Sappers and Miners.
Search Light Section.
48th Pioneers.
Bridge Train.
1 Wagon Wireless set.
6th Divisional Army Signal Company.

Naval Flotilla, H.M.S. *Firefly* (new pattern river gunboat).
Samana (an old armoured tug-boat).
Comet (an old paddle-wheel river steamer).
Shaitan (tug boat armoured).

River Transport Steamers :—*Mejidieh, Blosse Lynch, Mosul, Julnar, Salimi.* Hospital clearing ships were the *Blosse Lynch* and *Mosul.*

Moving in three parallel columns on a widely extended front permitted rapid deployment for attack and easy and supple manœuvre, enabling me to envelop a wing of the enemy by merely converging my columns ; and in case of an action of encounter it was equally advantageous, for I could hold the enemy with one of the columns and punch him in flank with one or both of the others. Also, in case one column met with solid opposition in its advance, I had only to assist it by the turning manœuvre of one of its neighbouring columns, which could thus mutually assist each other. It will be observed that in this way I adhered always to the fundamental principles explained in Chapter I.

My orders regarding services, munitions, etc., were issued under the heading of Supplementary Instructions in Part II of operation orders, and included a notification that the advanced depot for supplies was at Kut-al-Amara ; that seven days' supplies for the force were magazined at Azizieh ; that all combatants were to carry one empty sand-bag apiece ; and that the bridge train and engineer stores would be towed by steamer. Orders and instructions I ordered to be marked confidential, and only to be issued to G.O.C.'s brigades and heads of departments, who would notify verbally to O.C.'s units what they found it necessary to tell them. This ensured that packets of typed orders and instructions were not scattered abroad throughout the force, for the enemy's secret agents would certainly have orders to collect all information published in orders, etc.

The M.G.G.S. wired me on 14th October, asking at what date I was prepared to resume the offensive, and what was my general plan of operations. He quoted a telegram from Sir Percy Cox, the chief political officer, who said that information had reached him that, owing to our marking time, certain Arab chiefs were beginning to wobble and treat with the Turks. In sending my plan of operations I ventured to remark that this telegram did not influence strategical and tactical decisions, and that it was a bad day for a commander when he allowed politics or policy to interfere with strategy—which all history is at hand to prove. In short, I was resolved not to attack the Turks until I had united my whole available force.

I have omitted to mention that Frazer's Post, comprising the 110th Mahrattas, commanded by Colonel Frazer, in a redoubt on the right bank of the river some four miles below Azizieh, was attacked by Arab tribesmen on the night of 10th-11th October. It was a surprise, and the Arabs, cutting the barbed wire, rushed into the work. There was a panic amongst the sepoys, but eventually a handful, under the personal command of Colonel Frazer, drove the Arabs out again. The raiders who penetrated into the redoubt only comprised between thirty and forty men, according to Colonel Frazer's estimate. Nine or ten Indian soldiers were killed and a dozen rifles were lost.

It was not the first time I had known of and experienced panics on the part of troops—and white troops, too—in savage warfare. In this case I went to Frazer's Post and investigated the matter. Two Indian officers were tried by court-martial and broken for cowardice, together with three or four sepoys. The 110th Mahrattas behaved very finely in subsequent operations, and it is well known that panics may occur with the best of troops in night work.

I had received a "snorter" from Sir John Nixon on 15th October, on the subject of my engineers' demand for defence material for the works at Azizieh, his wire to me starting with "What on earth are your engineers doing?" He said that they had already used thirty miles of wire, and were still asking for more, and also more search-lights. Sir John pointed out that he had already commented on the elaborate defence of the camp at Kurna prior to my advance, and the ideas of the defensive and going to ground were the fungus destroying the spirit of the offensive in the Sixth Division, and that Shaiba and the Gibraltar made of Kurna were examples of this. This was rather hard on the gallant Sixth Division, whose offensive spirit had been proved in two battles already, in a manner, I venture to say, hitherto unsurpassed in the annals of the British army, and was still further to be proved at the battle of Ctesiphon in an inspired ardour which even Caesar's famous Tenth Legion might have envied.

I replied that there was no question of the defensive with me, but that there was one of the defensive-offensive so long as I remained at Azizieh, close to the enemy. I was only taking ordinary precautions. I said that the wire was being used both at Azizieh and at Frazer's Post; that my entrenched camp consisted only of four small storm-proof redoubts, which economised strong detachments of security in the shape of picquets and supports; and that I should take it as a favour if I were allowed to scrutinise the demands of my services instead of this being done by his staff. I added also that when he read the account of the panic at Frazer's Post he would agree that wire is necessary for security.

On 12th November I sent the *Firefly*, the new river gunboat, very fast and heavily armed, some twenty miles down river to stretch a hand to a mahela convoy, long and anxiously expected. Of it I see in my diary: "Damn this convoy, which is delaying all my steamers, and has been made to *sail* from Kut for Azizieh against my wishes. Though I see no other way by which the food could come!"

The friendly Arabs had reported on 11th November that Ajil with 200 horsemen had gone down river to intercept it. I told the naval officer in command of the *Firefly* that he must not remain down river longer than midday, 14th November, and that he must come back as soon as Leachman, the political officer, considered it safe to do so. The convoy had 400 Indian soldiers as escort, which ought to have been quite enough for defence against the Arabs if judiciously distributed.

For the advance Chitty and Annesley had arranged seven supply barges, containing:—

* 15 days' rations for the British troops of my force.
15 " " Indian " " "
17 days' fuel
14 " grain.
14 " fodder.

A large supply of medical comforts and rum.

In addition a barge would be left at Azizieh loaded with two extra days' supplies for the men and animals of the whole force.

As regards land transport, I had:—

1,000 mules.
620 camels.
660 carts.
240 donkeys.

I had got land transport for the Sixth Division only. Sir John Nixon had granted my earnest request for the weak 30th Brigade, which belonged to Gorringe's 12th Division, but no land transport was given with it. Nor had the Cavalry Ammunition Column any transport allotted for it, and my staff

* One day's ration on the men and two in the Supply Column gave a total of 18 days' rations with me for the whole force.

had to improvise carts and mules for it, as well as for the howitzer ammunition.

I asked Colonel Chitty to take away the 24 carts which, in accordance with Headquarter orders, had to be set aside for salvage purposes, rifles, etc.—for after the battle of Kut-al-Amara Headquarters had been severe on the subject of the insufficient quantity of rifles and arms collected for Government. Now, however, it seemed to me no time to talk of salvage. " I have to win the battle," I said, " before I can think of wasting carts collecting rifles."

By 10th November the sick list of the 6th Division was down to 54 Indian troops of all ranks and 75 British.

On the eve of the advance, my whole force, including the two and a half battalions of the 30th Brigade, Naval Flotilla, non-combatants and native followers, amounted to 17,000, of whom just under 14,000 were combatants ; of this 14,000 only 8,500 were infantry.

An ever-recurring source of anxiety to me was the safe-guarding of the convoys of mahelas on the line of communications between Kut and Azizieh. The Arabs on the right bank of the river had become actively hostile. They harassed the sailing convoys by rifle fire, and in one or two cases I had to arrange against organised raids on my communications by Turkish cavalry and guns in combination with them. A steamer, cautiously feeling its way amongst shallow and tortuous channels in some awkward bend—for there cannot be in the world another such river as the Tigris for serpentine bends—would suddenly come under a heavy rifle fire from the bank at 300 yards' range or less.

Headquarters tried to make me furnish escorts for the convoys working between Kut and Azizieh. Naturally I objected to this dissemination of my already far too weak force. I had to comply, but the principle of taking my troops for safeguarding convoys was utterly opposed to the principle of Economy of Force. These guards should have been supplied by the General of Communications. I mention this incident to show how in every possible way we were undermanned. Headquarters could not make the line of communication troops, and naturally had to come down on my infantry, whom I naturally and properly protected tooth and nail ! They had to win the battle and take Baghdad : no one else was going to obtain our success.

On 11th November, as a preliminary to my advance on Ctesiphon, I pushed forward Brigadier-General Hamilton, with the 18th Infantry Brigade, with one battery attached, as an advanced guard at El Kutunie. The Cavalry Brigade, under Brigadier-General Roberts, was included in Hamilton's command. I instructed Hamilton to signal messages to me at Azizieh morning and afternoon as long as he was separated from the main body, so that I should know all was well. I

desired him to reconnoitre the road forward to Zeur, and he had to ascertain if the enemy still had guns on the bank at Baghdadie, for it had been from that locality that gun fire was brought to bear on our cavalry on the day we beat the woods at El Kutunie.

I told Hamilton that he must keep a careful look-out on Zeur, but I thought it likely that the enemy's covering force there would retire on his main body at Ctesiphon, as soon as Hamilton installed himself at El Kutunie. For river reconnaissance I also gave Hamilton the *Samana,* which was to be used very cautiously when reconnoitring Baghdadie on the river, for I did not want her holed at this juncture. I recommended that the cavalry should carry out a feeling reconnaissance along the left bank, and endeavour to draw the fire of the concealed guns.

In my note-book I find I had arranged my movements in the advance on Ctesiphon as follows :—

" 11th November—Hamilton's mixed brigade and cavalry brigade to be pushed to El Kutunie *en avant garde. Samana* to be placed at his disposal.

" 15th November—Main body of my force to march to El Kutunie and all ships to come on to that place on that date.

" 16th November—The force united to advance on Zeur (a seven miles' march from El Kutunie) and drive the enemy from his entrenchments at that locality. Probably only the advanced guard will be engaged. All ships must be united at Zeur this date. The Divisional Train and Divisional Supply Column not to come on from El Kutunie till Zeur is made good.

" 17th November—I shall march the united force to Lajj reach.

" 18th November—Reconnaissance of Ctesiphon and possibly demonstration on right bank to deceive enemy.

" 19th November—Battle."

The above was the programme laid down, but it had to be modified, for it was 22nd November before the battle was fought.

I intended to leave the Supply Column and Divisional Train, including Baggage section, parked at Lajj ; and also all the ships under the protection of a rearguard of half an Indian battalion, which was the minimum strength requisite to guard this column. Indeed, they would very probably be attacked by Arab horsemen, and possibly by Turkish cavalry.

On 11th November I ordered the redoubts at Azizieh, which protected the camp, to be filled in, as I had to cut down the defences to the dimensions of a small fortified post in order to suit the garrison I left there, which would be a bed-rock minimum also, to guard the considerable quantity of stores and ammunition I had to leave behind. I ordered Frazer's Post to be demolished and its garrison to rejoin the 17th Brigade. I proceeded the same day up river in the gunboat *Firefly*, with the S.N.O. and shelled Baghdadie. We came under rifle fire from the banks, but, as no guns opened on us, I concluded rightly that the Turks had withdrawn the guns from Bahgdadie.

On my return in the evening, I fixed the garrison to be left at Azizieh—half a battalion of the 24th Punjabis (30th Brigade). The other half of this battalion I intended to use for guarding the ships, supply column, and Divisional Train during the battle of Ctesiphon. I also left at Azizieh a hundred convalescents able to handle a rifle but not to march, two four-inch guns for which I had no means of transport, and a 15-pounder field gun. The garrison was to be commanded by Major Farmer, R.G.A.

Sir John Nixon, accompanied by his Staff and by Sir Percy Cox, the Political Officer, arrived at Azizieh in the *Malamir*, on 13th November. He decorated Major Utterson of the Dorset Regiment with the D.S.O., at a parade held for that purpose. Utterson had shown conspicuous gallantry throughout the campaign, and was again to distinguish himself at Ctesiphon.

CHAPTER IX

THE ADVANCE ON CTESIPHON

I SUBMITTED my plan or project of operations for the advance on Baghdad to Sir John Nixon, on 8th November. It was as follows :—

The Principal Objective.

(1) In moving forward for the next stage my principal objective is to seek the bulk of the hostile force in the field and to destroy it, then to occupy Baghdad.

(2) To this end, the decisive victory having been gained, it must be put to profit by an unrelaxing pursuit, followed by a march on Baghdad and its occupation. Such was my intention in the Kut-al-Amara operations, but a combination of circumstances rendered that victory indecisive as far as Baghdad is concerned. Had the offensive wing of manœuvre progressed in the battle as I had planned, the Amarah to Baghdad phase of the campaign would have probably ended in an unopposed entry into Baghdad.*

(3) (*a*) The bulk of the enemy's forces is on the left bank of the Tigris, some four miles above (north of) Ctesiphon, near the bridge of boats, handy for transfer to either bank, i.e., his Principal Mass—4,000 Infantry (estimated).

(*b*) A *force de couverture* estimated at 2,500 Infantry, 700 Cavalry and 400 Camel Corps, is entrenched at Zeur on the left bank.

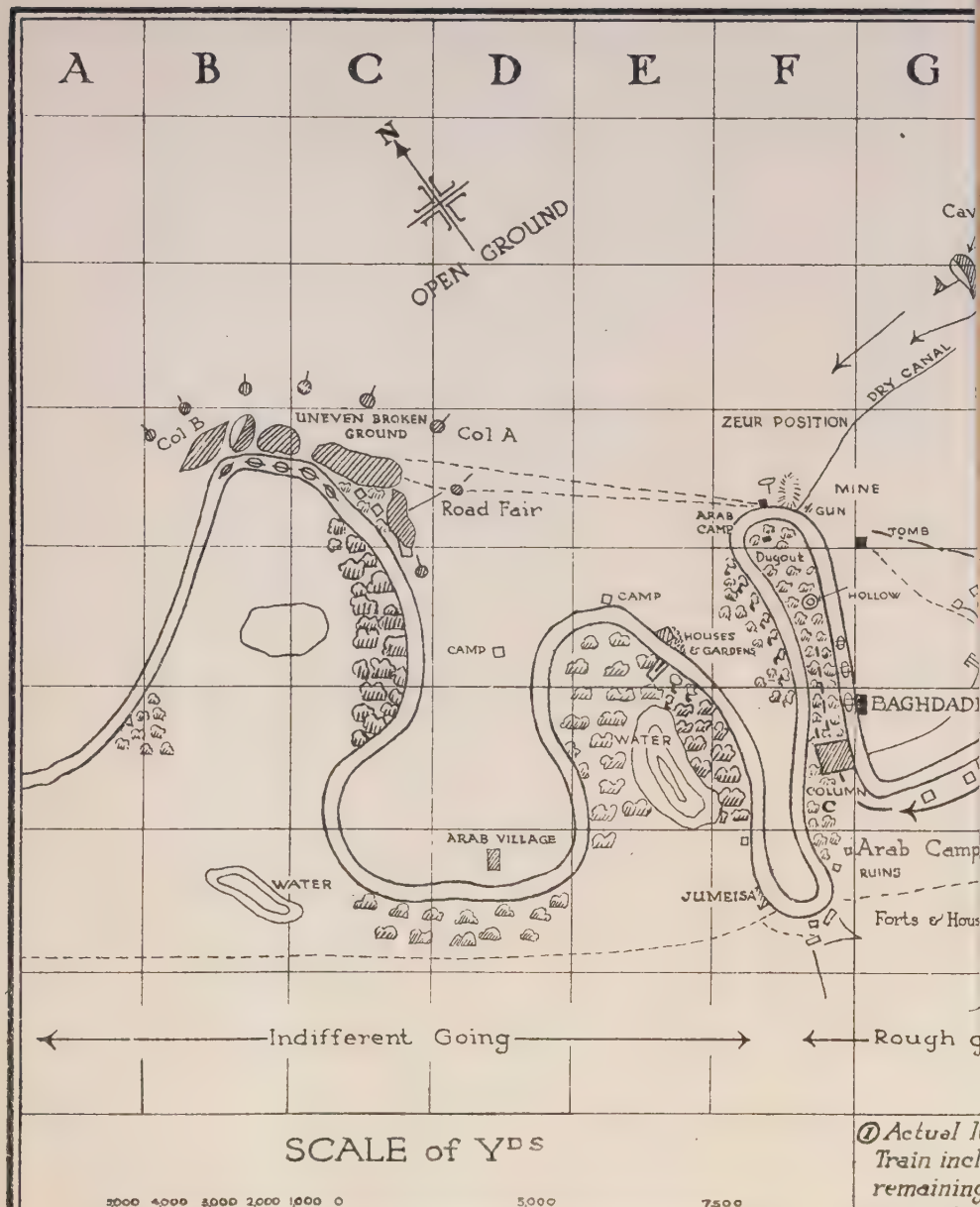
(*c*) On the right bank, holding a mile of entrenchments at Scleucia (including one strong redoubt) is a detachment of 1,500 Infantry and 500 Cavalry.

(*d*) The lines of Ctesiphon on the right bank are occupied by an estimated 1,500 Infantry and 500 Cavalry.

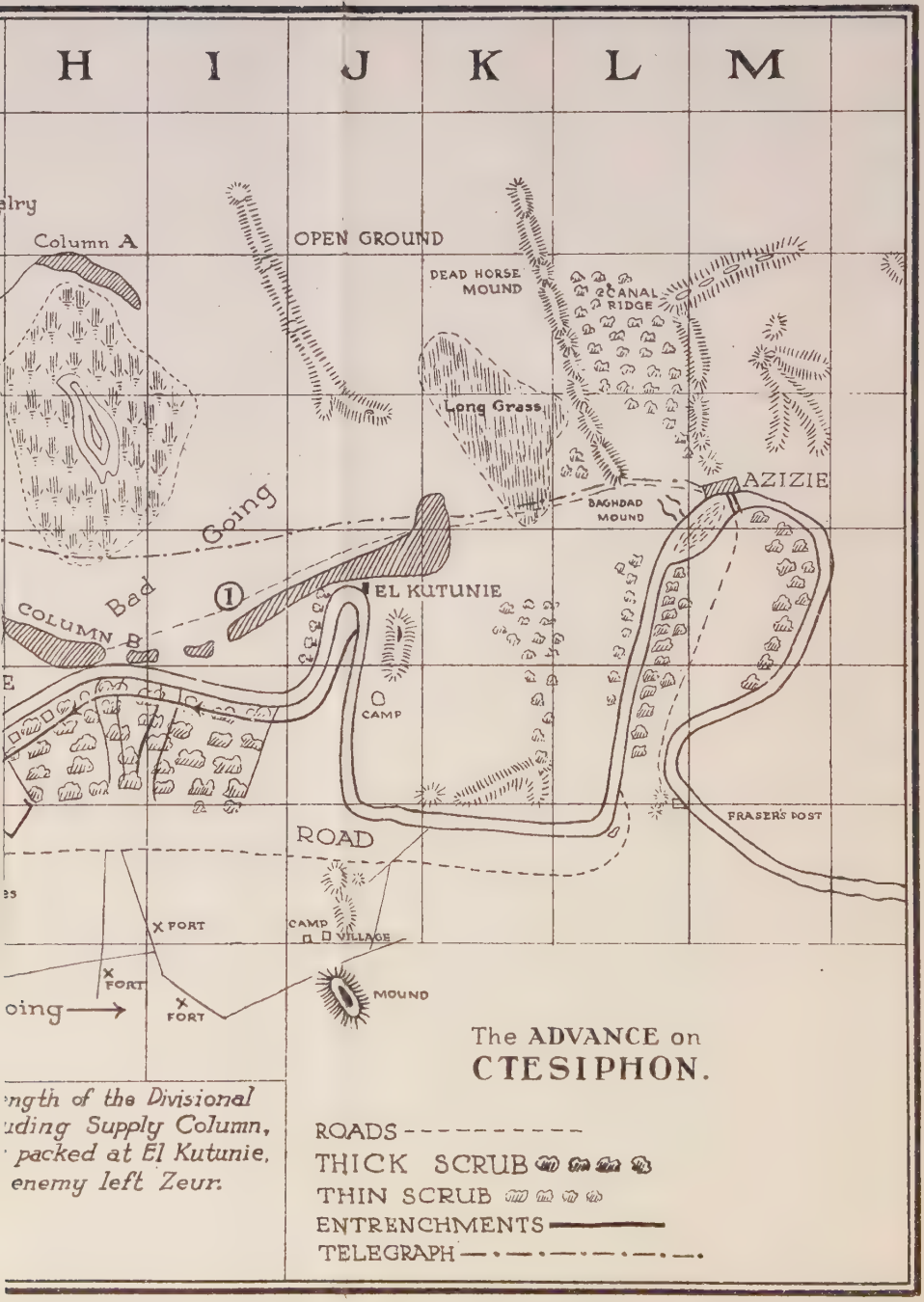
The total of the enemy's forces in the field is variously estimated at 10,900 combatants and 30 guns, and at 12,000 to 13,000 combatants and 40 guns.

(4) Therefore it is indicated that I should advance from Azizieh by the left bank, the Baghdad road being the shortest and most advisable to gain the desired goal, which is to defeat the bulk of the hostile forces in the field and to occupy Baghdad. My directing idea is to get Nureddin to fight me in the open if

* But how long we should have remained there before being thrown out again is another question. We could never have stayed there for any length of time with anything under an army corps.



① Actual T
Train incl
remaining
until the



ngth of the Divisional
uding Supply Column,
packed at El Kutunie,
enemy left Zeur.

possible, as a continuous campaign of attacking entrenchments lessens the men's keenness for battle.

(5) In consequence of the above principles and ideas I intend to unite all my forces in my hand and to move forward *united* to attack the enemy's covering force at Zeur, which, according to tactical principles, should retire on the main body at Ctesiphon as soon as I advance to El Kutunie from here.

If, on the contrary, it stands to fight in the Zeur entrenchments, so much the better for me. It will enable me to take advantage of a tactical error—dissemination of force—and destroy this detached force in consequence.

Zeur is distant from Ctesiphon some 16 miles (and even 19 from where the main body of the Ctesiphon troops is stationed), and El Kutunie is only seven miles from Zeur. So the main force at its station north of Ctesiphon will hardly be able to unite itself with the force at Zeur in time to prevent me from destroying it.

I should march straight against the force at Zeur, drawing in my turning attack like a net on to their left flank and rear.

(6) (*A*) If, on the other hand, the enemy falls back on Ctesiphon, I shall follow as rapidly as possible (endeavouring with my Cavalry Brigade to cut off this rearguard) and attack him in his position at Ctesiphon on the left bank of the river, by the same tactics, of the turning move with the Principal Mass against the enemy's left flank and rear, as I used at the Battle of Kut-al-Amara; whilst with a minimum force I contain that part of his position which lies north of the Baghdad Road (some $3\frac{3}{4}$ miles only of entrenchments and redoubts). My Cavalry Brigade, working on the exterior flank of the turning attack and moving in a wide circle, will attack the enemy's left rear.

(*B*) Or, in order to avoid the enemy's invitation to attack him in his entrenched position at Ctesiphon, and so make him cross after me to the other bank and thus draw him into open ground, where he will have no entrenchments, and so be far less formidable, I should throw my bridge of boats across the Tigris at Saisbannah, some five miles west of Zeur, in the night, cross to the right bank, and move on Baghdad.

This would, I think, compel Nureddin to cross the river by his bridge of boats above Ctesiphon and march some five miles in order to occupy the trenches on the right bank (only one mile of trenches) which can easily be turned by me. The great bulk of his force would then be compelled to fight in the open, and the remedy again to be applied would be the turning move with my Principal Mass against his rear and right (west) flank, the cavalry and horse artillery moving in a wide sweep to the westward to occupy mounds (twenty feet high), three miles north of the enemy's position, close to and commanding the bridge of boats; attacking the mounds if held by the enemy

(7) I prefer "B" plan as it should be very decisive if Nureddin gives battle in this way; and the necessity of having to force the unformidable Diala River would be obviated. I have my bridge of boats with me, and can cross wherever I wish to enter Baghdad.

There is an existing bridge of boats at Qararah, and the boat-bridge at the mouth of the Diala is not removed yet, I think. Other reasons for not attacking the Ctesiphon position on the left bank are: firstly, because the enemy invites me to do so; and, secondly, the Shrine of Salman Pak is there, a most sacred place to Mohammedans, and the Mohammedans among our Indian troops are already talking amongst themselves of the sacrilege of firing on such a holy place as Salman Pak.

(8) Should Nureddin, on my adopting "B" plan, retire into Baghdad and call on the inhabitants to defend the Holy City—which I do not think probable, for once in the city his Arab battalions would largely disband themselves—I should take up a position south-east of the city and act according to circumstances. I should bombard or assault after giving the inhabitants time to think of the consequences; or I should make use of secret-service money among the civilians to compel the Turkish force to retire without fighting and so spare the city from the horror of an assault.

If I have to attack the city on the left bank of the Tigris, the frontal attack will be along the left bank of the river connected with my ships and gunboats, the offensive wing of manœuvre (Principal Mass) turning the city by the eastward and forcing an entrance by roads entering Baghdad at its north and north-east fronts.

(9) The enemy has practically no transport but his steamers and barges.

(10) What is the enemy likely to do?

I think it is probable that he will continue his strategy of the pure defensive, since he has not the mobility nor the power of manœuvring necessary for him to change the defensive into the offensive.

Since I advanced to attack Kurna the Turkish generals have been on the passive defensive throughout. For the last century or more of their history they have followed this course; from the time of the defence of Acre against Bonaparte up to the defence of Plevna and that of the famous lines of Tchataldtcha covering Constantinople. The Turk fights well only when behind defences, and he has been mediocre, to say the least of it, in the open. His strategy in Mesopotamia after Shaiba has been to retire from defensive position to defensive position into the interior of the country, so as to gain time, during which those factors which constantly tend to weaken the tide of the offensive—in Europe, want of reinforcements, munitions, etc.; in the East, heat, disease, etc.—may operate

on the attacker. He has been slowly withdrawing, but approaching meanwhile his source of supply, Baghdad. In strategy the action of the Turks is absolutely in accordance with the fundamental principles of the art of war. Economy of Force demands that they should unite every soul to fight in their Principal Theatre wherein the real decision is being fought out, i.e., the Gallipoli Peninsula, while their secondary or defensive fields of action, such as Syria, Mesopotamia, and Arabia, should only be held on the defensive by minimum forces.

Therefore I do not expect the Turks to take the offensive against us in Mesopotamia until they are successful in the Gallipoli Peninsula, in which case the offensive in overwhelming numbers will be taken at once in Mesopotamia.

(11) I hope the Army Commander will make every effort to bring in all men detached from my division at Basra and so forth, and to urge the authorities in India to send at least another division, and that quickly. So long as more troops come into the country even the Arabs will remain tranquil and we shall retain our confidence. As it is now the British soldier and the Sepoy look over their shoulders, uneasy at the great distance from the sea.

The grand total of my troops in Azizieh, to date, is 9,183 combatants, and in addition 365 weak men, unable to march for a few days but able to use a rifle and hold a post.

P.S.—Since writing the above general project of operations I have received such bad reports as to the difficulties of terrain on the right bank in the neighbourhood of the south end of the old loop of the river—eight miles south of Ctesiphon as the crow flies—in the shape of deeply cut and accidented ground. water cuts of great size, and thick scrub, as to turn my thoughts more to the left bank, on which after all lies the shortest and best road to my desired goal, which is to destroy the bulk of the enemy's forces in the field. Another argument in favour of using the left bank as my avenue of approach to Baghdad, at any rate as far as the battle of Ctesiphon is concerned, is that the hostile force is in front of me there, with an impassable river on his flank and the equally impassable River Diala in his rear, and with only one or two flimsy bridges to cross either. In such a case the enemy's defeat may well mean his utter destruction.

Telegram from M.G.G.S., dated 7th November, 1915 :—

"Army Commander quite approves your general idea and thinks it is sound to defer your final decision as you propose."

On first getting my project of operations, Sir John Nixon said he preferred that I should operate on the right bank from Zeur onwards, i.e., my Project B, but I declined to alter my

project unless I saw good reason to do so when I reached Zeur, as the principle of seeking the bulk of the hostile forces in the field should not be departed from. I had the direction and conduct of these operations and therefore I took all risks. I said that I must follow my own judgment.

On 15th November, having united my Division at Azizieh, I marched it to El Kutunie, a distance of seven miles, where I joined up the advanced guard sent out on 11th November, and all ships were brought in.

The Turkish force at Ctesiphon was estimated by our Intelligence Department and aerial reconnaissance at roughly 11,000 combatants and 36 guns; but it will be seen this was not nearly the enemy's real strength, which undoubtedly amounted to over 15,000* men and anything between 40 and 50 guns. The intelligence was in the hands of Colonel Beach, Army Headquarters, who imparted information to me as he got it. Just before advancing from Azizieh, I questioned him on the many local Arab reports we heard of large Turkish reinforcements arriving at Ctesiphon. He replied, "We have heard these reports, but have no official confirmation of them." Large reinforcements, it is now known, came from Mosul and elsewhere and joined Nureddin's army at Ctesiphon, some before, and Khalil's army corps during, the battle; so that the native reports and rumours proved true in the end. Beach also told me that Sir John Nixon had received a telegram from the War Office, London, saying that they had very reliable information that an expedition was on its way from Turkey to Baghdad This is said in no carping spirit at the work of the Intelligence branch in Mesopotamia, and in particular at that of Colonel Beach, for whose energy and ability I have the highest regard. To sift the truth from many reports was not an easy task. But I wish to establish facts as I found them and with which I had to deal, and to show that we should never have taken the offensive in a secondary theatre without large reinforcements. As a German officer at Constantinople said to me: "Instead of 9,000 infantry you should have had 90,000!" Who will now say he was wrong, when the strength of the force given to General Maude to make the second advance on Baghdad is compared with mine?

Since my return from captivity I read in the Mesopotamia Inquiry Report "that General Townshend (referring to my warning) did not press his objections, and when he advanced on November 21st, to attack the two strong lines of the Turkish entrenchments at Ctesiphon, a spirit of intense optimism animated the Headquarters and Administrative Staff."

I know nothing about this "intense optimism." All I do know

* In his despatch, Sir John Nixon estimated "the Turks at 13,000 *regular* troops and 38 guns, and there are reports of further arrivals of reinforcements." In my despatch of the battle I said that there were nearer 20,000 Turks and between 40 and 50 guns.

is that I was determined to carry the operation through if it could possibly be done, and it was my plain and simple duty to carry out the orders of my superior to the best of my ability, although his orders were against my better judgment. Personally I had no doubts in my mind as to the extreme gravity of the results of this advance—an offensive undertaken with insufficient forces, and not only that, but an offensive undertaken in a secondary theatre of the war, where our strategy should have been to have remained on the defensive with minimum forces sufficient for that purpose. All my study indicated disaster to me.

However, the die was cast; my superior had judged otherwise. Therefore I made up my mind to carry through the operation with confidence and cheeriness and a joke for everyone in the bivouacs, as is my custom. A certain amount of optimism is absolutely necessary in all operations of war, and especially on the part of the General Staff, in order to induce feelings of confidence and security among the troops. Imagine the effect of a Staff Officer, with an order to advance, galloping up to a column with a face of excitement and consternation! The troops would at once conclude that there was something wrong. And so, when Sir John Nixon asked me on the eve of the battle, "Are you confident of winning, Townshend?" I replied, "Yes, I shall win all right." And I did win.

On inspection of Hamilton's measures of security at El Kutunie, I pushed out a mixed detachment, some 4,000 to 5,000 yards along the road to Zeur, and also placed two strong picquets of 50 rifles each on the right bank of the river opposite our camp to protect it from insult, supporting them with the guns of the *Firefly* and *Samana*.

On the evening of the 16th November, there were still no signs of the steamers *Shihab*, *Shurur* or *Shirin*, which were behind time. It was exasperating. To complete my troubles, I found that the *Salimi*, which carried our coal and oil and on which the ships entirely depended, had been sent back to look for the missing steamers!

I could not wait any longer. I decided to send the *Samana* gunboat to tow up the two barges with our two four-inch guns on board. C Column was to march from Azizieh to El Kutunie and all ships were to come on from there, including the bridge train, the steam launches for which had arrived.

The missing ships luckily arrived on the afternoon of 18th November, and I immediately gave orders for an advance on Zeur the next day. Although I expected the covering force there to fall back slowly on to the Turkish main body as I advanced, still there is no knowing what a Turkish commander may or may not do, when he is unaccompanied by German staff officers. So my dispositions were for possible battle. I decided to march a detachment by the right bank, as I must

deal with the fortified Arab villages of Jumeisa and Baghdadie on that bank. They were strongly held by the Arabs of Sheikh Ajil, and practically barred the passage of my ships at a dangerous loop and shallow channel in the river. Moreover, 500 Turkish cavalry with two field guns were reported to be with the Arabs in this locality. Thus, much to my annoyance, I was forced to put a detachment on the other side of an impassable river; and this detachment had to be strong enough to run no risk of suffering a check or being held up. A brigade was indicated, which should also co-operate with me in the attack on Zeur, as it would be fairly easy to bring enfilade fire on the Zeur entrenchments from the top of the bend on the right bank as soon as Jumeisa and Bagdadie had been taken by the collar.* The detachment would have to rejoin me at Zeur by means of my boat-bridge, which I should throw over for it. Fire from the gunboats must supply the place of artillery.

I should myself, with the Principal Mass of my force, advance against the Zeur entrenchments in two parallel columns, on a widely extended front. With the left column (that moving along the left bank of the Tigris) I should make a containing attack on the Zeur entrenchments in front, whilst with the right column (the offensive wing of manœuvre) I should turn the northern flank and rear of the entrenchments and so roll up the enemy's defence.

A preliminary order was issued on the arrival of the missing ships, warning the division, the Naval Flotilla, and the ship convoy, to be in readiness to advance the next morning, and my complete operation orders for the advance on Zeur were issued at 4.30 p.m. on 18th November, 1915.

At 6 p.m. I received an air reconnaissance to the effect that 4,000 or 5,000 of the enemy were on the march by the left bank from Ctesiphon to Zeur—evidently to reinforce the covering force entrenched in that locality—and also that 5,000 or 6,000 Turks were in motion towards us from Ctesiphon by the right bank, 3,000 of whom were only three or four miles away. This report was corroborated by another aerial reconnaissance conducted by Major Reilly, in whom I had implicit confidence. I had disbelieved the first report on the grounds of its improbability. However, on Reilly's corroboration, I determined at once to entrench the minimum force, represented by column "C," on the right bank at El Kutunie to cover the ships. Meanwhile I marched at daylight with the principal mass ("A" and "B" columns and the Cavalry Brigade) to attack the enemy at Zeur; or on meeting them to fight an encounter battle, for, since the enemy had divided his forces by an

* I also hoped to turn the march of the detachment along the right bank into an advantage, by inducing Nureddin at Ctesiphon to transfer more troops from the left bank to the right. But, as I had succeeded in this trick at Kut-al-Amara, I did not expect it to meet with a similar measure of success.

impassable river, my tactics were clear—to hold him on the right bank with my minimum force, while with my maximum force I destroyed him on the left.

In the early morning I advanced on Zeur with two columns, about 5,000 yards apart, the cavalry working on the exterior flank of the exterior column. The enemy evacuated the place after a slight skirmish between the cavalry of both sides.

I have reason to believe that the reported offensive movements of large bodies from Ctesiphon on both flanks were merely feints or demonstrations to make me lose time, and if so they succeeded.* Aeroplane observers can easily be deceived by a body of the enemy, who, on sighting the aeroplane, move at once in a contrary direction to that of the real march, and turn back as soon as the machine has gone to give the news.

I wired for Column " C " and the ships to come on to Zeur. It was not till 9 p.m. that they arrived, but the bridge was thrown across during the night, and " C " Column joined me at daylight. At 9 a.m. on 20th November, I marched to Lajj reach, whence I intended to deliver battle against the Turks at Ctesiphon.

While at Zeur I had decided that I would not cross to the right bank, as the shortest and most judicious road to my desired goal lay on the left bank, and I should compel him to fight with the impassable Tigris on one flank and the equally impassable Diala in his rear. He had, of course, one or two boat-bridges available, but these would not avail him in a disorderly retreat.

I now prepared for battle, issuing my general instructions, which I gave out in a lecture to all General officers commanding brigades, with as many field officers as could be spared also present, so that all should work heart and soul with me, and in *one doctrine* in the battle. It will be seen that my battle manœuvre was the same as in the Battle of Kut-al-Amara. I sought victory by throwing my Principal Mass on what I judged to be the enemy's weakest point—namely, his left flank.

General instructions as regards the rôle *to be played by the three attacks:—*

Preparatory Attack :	Minimum Force	17th Brigade.
	Turning Attack	18th Brigade and Mounted Troops.
Decisive Attack :	Principal Mass	16th Brigade and Mounted Troops and 30th Brigade (less 1 Battalion).

In the coming battle, whether it is fought on the right or left bank, the manœuvre I shall use is the one I used at the

* Nureddin was anxiously awaiting the arrival of Khalil's army corps.

battle of Kut-al-Amara, i.e., the manœuvre against the enemy's flank and rear. See Section 102, para. 3, Field Service Regulations, Part I, 1909 (Reprint 1914). As there are some officers who have not the book in their possession, I will quote the reference : " Broadly speaking, success in battle may be sought by means of a converging movement of separated forces to strike the enemy's front and flank, few, if any, reserves being retained in hand by the General-in-Chief.

" A decisive attack against some portion of the enemy's front offers a possibility of breaking his army in two and may give great and far-reaching results. The long range, accuracy and rapidity of fire of modern weapons, however, reduce the chances of success of such an attack (the manœuvre against the enemy's centre), while failure may result in the attacking force being enveloped and destroyed. It will usually therefore be wiser to direct the decisive effort against one of the enemy's flanks, the choice of the objective being made either before or after deployment, according to circumstances. The development of fire effect is usually facilitated when the plan of battle has for its object the envelopment of one, or if in very superior strength, of *both* the enemy's flanks."

At Kut-al-Amara I divided my force into two portions—a minimum force, Column " B," and a Principal Mass or maximum force, Column " A." Whilst I held on to the enemy with Column " B " I gave the round-arm swing and punch with Column " A." The Cavalry co-operated with the attack of the offensive wing of manœuvre working on its exterior flank, which is the accepted position of the bulk of the cavalry in battle in the French and German armies. It will be observed that in the coming battle I have added another portion, or, rather, divided my force into three portions :

The Minimum Force or Preparatory Attack ;

The Turning Attack, with which the mounted troops co-operate ;

The Principal Mass or Decisive Attack.

The reason for this is that the enemy will expect me now to repeat the distribution of troops in deployment as was made at Kut-al-Amara, and will endeavour to meet the turning attack with his reserve of 3,000 or 4,000 men, placed back as far as Qusabah. I hope to surprise him at a time when the turning attack is hotly engaged, with the powerful blow of the Principal Mass delivered on the spot marked " V.P." on the map. That is the vital point.

If, during the attack of the Principal Mass, the enemy counter-attacks any other portion of my force, all the threatened troops have to do is to hold on and the vigour of the Decisive Attack will be increased. The success of the Principal Mass at the Vital Point means ultimate success at all points.

In addition, I trust to Column " C " (mounted troops) to

paralyze all action of the enemy's general reserve by attacking him in rear.

Though the three attacks (in reality four, counting the attack of the mounted troops as being distinct from the 18th Brigade's turning attack) appear to be separated, they are not so in reality, for I shall place them at distances apart, not beyond effective field artillery range, i.e., a distance of from 4,000 to 2,500 yards.

Rôle *of Preparatory Attack :—*

If I attack on the left bank, in all probability the Preparatory Attack (or Minimum Force) under General Hoghton will move frontally against the enemy, on a front of, say, 1,000 yards, with his right resting on the telegraph line.

The Divisional Artillery (Land Section) will be with the Preparatory Attack so as to aid it with powerful artillery. Thus General Hoghton's *rôle* will be to attack that wing of the enemy which is furthest from his line of retreat. His *rôle* is characterized by a defensive attitude and is analogous with our " Secondary or Defensive Field " in strategy. Aided by the spade and entrenching tool and the Divisional Artillery he will work his way forward to within long range from the enemy, if possible. Not only is his *rôle* to hold the enemy by the collar in his position, but, by making a great display and fight, he should induce him to use up his reserves. He will utilise all natural and artificial obstacles in the way of dry canals, water-cuts, and the accidents of the ground. He will not make his attack a decisive one until it is seen that the Principal Mass is moving forward to the attack. This will be the signal for every able-bodied man in the force to move resolutely towards the enemy. The *rôle* of the Minimum Force can well be called a combat of immobilisation and usury.

Rôle *of the Turning Attack :—*

After the battle has been well commenced by the Minimum Force, the Turning Attack—18th Brigade and Divisional Cavalry (one squadron), under Brigadier-General Hamilton—will attack the enemy's left flank and rear, which is a direct menace to his natural line of retreat. This attack must be pushed with vigour and resolution ; nothing must stop it.

Column " C " mounted troops, comprising the Cavalry Brigade, " S " Battery R.H.A., and 48th Pioneers, under Major-General Sir Charles Melliss, will co-operate by working on the exterior flank (north of the 18th Brigade), in a wide sweep of some eighteen miles, so as to attack the enemy in rear with its H.A. guns in the neighbourhood of Qusabah and take his second line of trenches in enfilade, thus seriously menacing his line of retreat. Its attack should be vigorously pushed, and the sound of its guns alone will cause the Turkish forces to the south at once to look over their shoulders with a feeling of fear. Column " C " mounted troops will be in communication with

Divisional Headquarters, which will be near the Divisional Artillery with the Preparatory Attack.

Rôle *of the Principal Mass or Decisive Attack* :—

On principle I shall order the Principal Mass forward as soon as the enemy seriously feels the Turning Attack. This attack will be launched straight forward against the spot marked " V.P." on the map. The advance of the Principal Mass will be the signal for the whole force to move forward against the enemy ; and every effort will be made by the Divisional Artillery Commander to bring a converging fire on " V.P." Even the guns of the Turning Attack will direct their fire if possible on " V.P." so that a clear avenue of approach may be swept for the Principal Mass under General Delamain.

To sum up the system of this attack :—

(*a*) I make a frontal containing attack with the Minimum Force in order to take the wing of the enemy in front of it by the collar and pin it to the ground.

(*b*) When the Minimum Force is well engaged, the Turning Attack is launched against that flank of the enemy which lies nearest his natural line of retreat.

(*c*) When the Turning Attack is taking effect, the Principal Mass or hammer blow will be launched against the same wing as that shaken by the Turning Attack.

Such dispositions carry out the two greatest of the fundamental principles of war :

(*a*) Economy of Force, i.e., the judicious grouping of your forces for gaining victory. In other words you concentrate your Principal Mass or Maximum Force in your principal field of operations and your Minimum Force in your secondary (or defensive) field for secondary operations.

(*b*) The Principle of the Mass, which may be said to be part and parcel of that of Economy of Force. It consists in operating with the greatest mass of your troops on the decisive point, i.e., the enemy's weakest or vital point, which on principle must be on that flank which lies nearest his natural line of retreat.

These great principles won Napoleon and his greatest pupil Moltke all their victories. They form part of the doctrine of the great Continental armies of to-day ; and the so-called French and German theories are nothing more or less than the application of Napoleon's two greatest principles. Napoleon preferred the bold, wide, sweeping turning movement or attack because its action is so decisive ; Moltke, much more cautious, preferred the enveloping movement or attack, as it is less risky. But it gives far less decisive results than the turning attack, and, as Napoleon observed, " He who fears risks had better not play cards." As a matter of fact my dispositions for

this attack, by converging, will become finally an envelopment only, as at Kut-al-Amara.

The German General Staff declare that there is no difference at all between their system and that of Napoleon. The centre, they say, is practically impenetrable in these days, and the flanks must be turned or enveloped in order to obtain a decisive and annihilating result. "Bind or fix the enemy in front whilst you turn and crush one of his wings." The strength of the attack lies in its convergent nature, consequently envelopment is the most advantageous form of attack.

"The enveloping troops have to face the danger which threatens their outer flank, and they should therefore be followed by reserves" (Von der Goltz).

In this case the mounted troops will, I think, apply the remedy to the enemy's counter-attack, and the enemy has not the manœuvring power or the will to leave his entrenchments and counter-attack the Turning Movement.

Of course, if I had had the two divisions I asked for, which would have made me superior in numbers to the enemy, entrenched in his position—and the attack always supposes great superiority over the enemy as regards numbers—I could have made a frontal attack with half a division, while with the other division and a half I could have enveloped his flank and rear and made victory certain.

But I had to attack an enemy at least as strong as myself, on the defensive and in a very strong position, and so I hoped to make up for my want of numbers by exploiting the principle of Economy of Force. I hoped to paralyse a great part of the forces of the enemy, entrenched along a large extent of front, by the use of an inferior fraction of my troops, acting as a minimum force, disguising its weakness by boldness of action and ruse, whilst I hit the hammer blow on the enemy's flank and rear with my Principal Mass. This was to be a decisive blow which would bring victory. Von der Goltz, in "The Nation Armed," describes this use of the principle of Economy of Force. "A skilful general will often know how to paralyse the forces of the enemy by an inferior fraction of his own troops, disguising its weakness by audacity, or in forcing it to undertake an enterprise which will cost heavily. Then he will be able to bring numerical superiority at the place where he will strike the decisive blow, where alone it is profitable. It is a question of economic talent—and we call it a wise economy of forces, which constitutes a condition of success."

I hoped, by means of a turning manœuvre with the Principal Mass of my force, either to throw the Turks into the Tigris or to compel them to a disastrous flight across the Diala River, some six miles behind them. That river was impassable, and they only had one bridge of boats over it. It will be seen that

I very nearly succeeded. For success I must trust largely to the bomb and bayonet. I had no illusions as to the extreme gravity of my task, and I knew that in the above plan lay my only chance of success. He who trusts to driving the enemy from his position solely by superiority of fire effect will be rudely disappointed. The assault must be made through a tempest of shell and bullets; a resolute and steady advance must be continued. I believed that the Turk, when he realised he could not stop us, would not wait for the clubbed rifle, the bayonet, and the grenade.

*Instructions in case we had street fighting in Baghdad.**

Street fighting must be considered under two headings:—

(1) Fighting in streets, villages and houses. To turn out troops defending these localities.

(2) Quelling an insurrection in a city, or fighting civil inhabitants defending their houses, as at Saragossa in Spain.

Firstly, it must be understood that whether you are fighting in streets, or villages, or forcing the passsage of a river or chain of mountains, or fighting in mountains, woods, etc., the fundamental principles of war hold good. Formerly, military writers innumerable laid down different tactics and manœuvres for attacking or defending localities. This was all wrong; the great principles of holding with the minimum and hitting with the maximum, of Economy of Force, and of bringing the Mass to bear against the enemy's weakest point (which must be one of his flanks or his centre) always hold good, by land or sea.

In street fighting, then, in order to drive out troops defending themselves in a city, the task must be divided up into sectors, one of which is the secondary field, in which the minimum force carries out a holding or containing attack, combining a slow advance with an attack of immobilisation and usury. The principal or offensive field is allotted to the Principal Mass on the offensive, the *rôle* of which is to carry out a turning or enveloping manœuvre by fighting its way along roads and streets leading in the desired direction.

The column or columns will have to fight their way along defended streets with barricades and strongly defended houses on the opposite sides of the road. (A few strokes with a pick and you have a hole in the partition of houses). Or they can work along flat roofs. Garrisons of barricades, strong houses, etc., will always clear when they find their retreat menaced. *Always leave a bolt hole.* Otherwise a few desperate men in a

* I did not think that we should have any street fighting in Baghdad; but it is necessary to foresee everything. I knew that in history the Turks have given several worthy examples of the defence of towns. Perhaps the most remarkable was the case of Rosetta, or Damietta, where our troops, from want of instructions, suffered a severe disaster.

house can keep you at bay a long time. If you have not cut off a defended house open up a parley. Offer any terms to get possession of the house without having to fight for it.

In order to approach an isolated defended building, such as a barracks or tower, hall or church in an open square, use a cart or two laden with sacks, wood, stones, etc., and push it in front of you, Thus you can go up to the main entrance with impunity and blow in the doors.*

When moving along a street under fire from the houses, move your men in two ranks, one on each side of the street, as close to the houses as the men can get. The men of each single rank must fire up at the windows and loopholes of the opposite side of the street, and the defenders will be in a worse position than their adversaries in the street.

Parallel columns should communicate if possible, by cross alleys or streets, or by passages cut through houses.

Always follow up each column by a stream of reinforcements or the head of a column will grow anxious at no signs of troops or supports coming up behind, and will become uneasy and hesitating.

Always have sappers at the head of your columns with plenty of axes and crowbars. A rifle fired into the lock of a door will destroy it. Crowbars are essential for knocking a hole from one house to another.

When street fighting is considered under the heading of (2) above, i.e., when dealing with a revolt or insurrection, one should act on the same principles. One should endeavour to isolate the quarter of the city to be attacked, to divide it up into sectors, and to deal with one sector at a time.

Always turn a defended locality or house. Never attack it frontally.

To hold a city against a rising of the inhabitants one should hold each avenue of approach with a minimum force and keep a Central or Principal Mass in some central position ready to reinforce any of the minimum forces as may be desirable.

I had halted and bivouacked my force at Lajj, only a very short day's march from the Turkish position. We could see the famous arch of Ctesiphon in the distance. Reconnaissances were carried out to fix the *rendezvous* of the different attacks—The Cavalry Column and Turning Attack ; the Principal Mass ; and the frontal or containing attack by the Minimum Force—the Cavalry Brigade ensuring the security of the reconnaissances. It was ascertained that a track marked in the map, apparently leading from Lajj northward round the enemy's position, really existed, and formed an excellent guide for the various columns when marching to get into position. In short, we made all preparations for battle.

* The Tank is taken from this idea of approaching buildings by the use of such a moving shield as above.

Air reconnaissances also were carried out against the enemy's position at Ctesiphon. These showed us alterations in the defences and the grouping of his force. Major Reilly, the brilliant aviator, who had been of the utmost assistance to me in the campaign by his daring reconnaissances and his excellent eye-sketches of the enemy's positions, was lost on this afternoon. He proposed that he should cut the telegraph wires in several places north of Baghdad on the eve of the battle, and I sanctioned the raid. (In the battle itself he had charged himself with the mission of destroying the bridge over the Diala by bombing). Evening came, darkness fell, and he had not returned. I knew that he must have come to grief, but hoped that, if an accident had happened to his machine, he might find his way to the river. But Fate was against him. During the siege of Kut I learnt from the Arabs that his machine was seen to come down, and he was made a prisoner by the Arabs and taken to the Turks. It was very unfortunate at this moment to lose such a valuable officer.

I was now ready for battle—for which I issued my operation orders at 1.30 p.m. on 21st November. I also issued secret and confidential instructions to G.O.C. Columns and heads of departments that in case of a repulse the force would fall back on Lajj under the protection of Column " A," which would become the rearguard.

CHAPTER X

THE BATTLE OF CTESIPHON

It will be seen by the operation orders that the different columns or groups of attack proceeded to take up their positions of assembly by night marches on the night of 21st-22nd November.

C Column, composing the preparatory or frontal attack, moved out of camp at 2 p.m. The groups constituting the turning manœuvre and the Principal Mass were to march at dusk as secretly as possible, unlike the march of C Column, which was ostentatiously followed by the Divisional Troops and was so spread out as to give the idea that it was the main body of the force. Divisional Headquarters marched with the Divisional Troops at the tail of Column C.

I had lent one of my best staff officers, Captain Morland, of the Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry, to General Delamain for the battle. He and Lt. Matthews, R.E., were to guide the combined Columns B and A along the track leading north and west from Lajj. This would bring them to the various positions of assembly. I had left half the 103rd Mahratta Light Infantry—from Hoghton's brigade, or C Column—to guard the ship convoy at Lajj. Every other combatant was in the ranks. I had a total of 40 guns, including those on the gunboats ; of guns on land only the field batteries and howitzer battery were mobile—22 in all. At the last moment I gave the howitzer battery to Delamain to help him in the attack on the vital point designated in my orders, and for sweeping the Turkish trenches, which we knew to be very strong and numerous in that locality. Sir John Nixon and the Headquarter Staff accompanied me. It must have been about 8 p.m. when C Column found itself on the bank of the river at Bustan, and watered, which was not an easy matter in the darkness, since the terrain was covered with thick, high grass and patches of cultivation, intersected by ditches and water cuts. I did not feel happy until the watering of the troops was over and all were concentrated for a long halt.

I had given strict orders about lights and smoking. I had announced that I would try by Court Martial anyone caught at this practice when on a night march. In my experience with British and Indian troops it is very hard to prevent on such occasions. I soon saw someone coolly light up, and, on going up to him, found it was one of the Headquarter Staff officers. I

do not think he has forgotten that night and my rebuke! He is a good officer, and did very good work in the battle in rallying runaways, etc.; I offered him a cigarette in the middle of it to show him that I bore no ill-feeling.

Column C moved on after a long halt and halted for the remainder of the night in what was judged to be approximately its position, and at daylight it moved forward towards the enemy's position some 3,000 yards distant. Hoghton felt his way cautiously on a widely extended front and I received news from Melliss, Hamilton and Delamain that the other groups of attack were in their places ready. All had gone well in the night marches of the combined columns and, as all were properly in their places, I took up my position with the Divisional Staff near the guns.

The entrenchments and redoubts forming the Turkish defensive position of Ctesiphon on the left bank of the Tigris extended fully six miles from the river bank northward. They were absolutely invisible. My map of them—wonderfully accurate considering the difficulties—had been made entirely by Major Reilly in his flights over the position. All that could be seen was a vast plain with the renowned and imposing Arch of Ctesiphon towering up as a landmark for many miles around, and the group of tombs around it, including the famous one of Salman Pak.

Hoghton's advance of the Minimum Force continued cautiously. He feared a trap; it was impossible to believe that the right half of the Turkish position was not occupied. Still, Hoghton was getting close and had not drawn fire. The enemy was evidently waiting to let him come close in, and Hoghton was not to be caught. So the exasperating delay went on. 7 o'clock came, 7.30, and still there was no firing from C Column or the enemy opposite. Evidently the Turks had orders not to fire till Hoghton came to close range. Thus when Hamilton with the turning attack sent me a message about 7.45 a.m., asking whether he should advance as he did not hear the guns of Column C, I answered in the affirmative. At 8 o'clock the turning attack started to move on its objective, a section of the Turkish second position or line of entrenchments shown dotted in the map, because they were not completely formed up. Before long we heard a roar of musketry to the northward, showing that the turning attack was engaged. This inspired the Turkish right wing at last to open on C Column, and our Divisional Artillery and, the gunboats on the river joining in, the battle became general, the fire continually increasing in violence and intensity.

The events of the battle now began to develop and succeed each other in a kaleidoscopic manner and with flash-light kodak speed. I suppose it must have been the right of Hamilton's turning attack swinging round behind their left flank and so

menacing their line of retreat which caused large bodies of Turks to abandon the first position and fall back on the second. The enemy could be seen retreating in masses, and, about the same time as I noticed this, General Delamain sent a message: "The enemy are in full retreat. May I advance on 'V.P.' with the Principal Mass." I replied in the affirmative—it was in accordance with my plans. I had intended to throw the Principal Mass against "V.P." as soon as Hamilton's turning attack began to affect the enemy seriously, but I never imagined that their resistance would collapse so soon.* I resolved to join the Principal Mass, as this might well mean a general advance on the Diala with a disorderly flight of the enemy in front of us. Having ordered C Column to assume a vigorous offensive, as the Principal Mass had been ordered to advance on "V.P." and having notified all G.O.C. Columns and the G.O.C. Divisional Artillery of my change of position, I galloped across towards "V.P." where a fierce fight was raging. Seeing what was evidently the staff of the English general galloping across the plain, the enemy's guns opened a brisk fire on us, and pitched some shells fairly close.

The Principal Mass, led by the 30th Brigade under the gallant Climo, carried "V.P." after a short and very fierce fire and bayonet fight in the most brilliant manner. Many of the Turks fought hand-to-hand till the end, whilst others left their entrenchments in flight. In some places I saw the trenches filled up with dead and dying Turks, and many of our own men strewed the route of the assailants in the advance up to the earth-works, Gurkhas and Punjabis being particularly noticeable. A mass of entangled wire and deep trenches compelled us to dismount near "V.P." and in getting to Delamain, with whom I wanted to speak in a place where I had to traverse a length of trench, the dead lay so thick together that we literally walked on the bodies. I found him sheltered behind a sand hillock, for the spot was under fire from some Turks cut off from retreat and installed in a redoubt some 700 yards south of "V.P.", and he explained his dispositions to me.

He had pushed on the Principal Mass, still led by the gallant 30th Brigade under Climo, against the Turkish second line of entrenchments west of "V.P." where the enemy were endeavouring to rally. This line was some 3,500 yards distant from "V.P." I saw he had detached a company or two of the Dorsets to move south from "V.P." directing themselves towards the Arch of Ctesiphon. He explained that they were under Major Utterson and their object was to give a helping

* It might appear at first sight that, if the Turkish commander had known his business, he might have extricated himself from our grasp by a short movement in retreat, in order to bring the enveloping attack into an embarrassing situation. That it was not so, is apparent on studying the plan of battle, when it will be seen that from the outset I had directed my turning attack under General Hamilton, and the Cavalry Brigade under General Melliss, against the flank of the Turkish *second position*. A great part of the Turkish troops, moreover, stood their ground in the first position, where desperate hand-to-hand fighting took place, a whole division being annihilated at "V.P." and its neighbourhood.

hand to General Hoghton, as their advance would induce the retreat of the enemy opposing C Column.

I ordered Evans to send a message to Hoghton to bring up his left shoulders and move on " V.P." for I saw that the battle was by no means finished. The enemy were making a fight for the second position, and it behoved me quickly to concentrate C Column on " V.P." in support of Column of A, the Principal Mass ; the right wing of the Turks must retreat, I reckoned, if left to themselves—and is obvious by a glance at the map, which shows how they were now situated in the bottom of a bottle ; and so it happened, although, as a matter of fact, they escaped along the river bank at night.

In all my experience of war I have never seen or heard of anything so fine as the deliberate and tranquil advance of the thin chain of Dorsets in extended order, moving south from " V.P."—the Turks in bunches evacuating trenches in front of them and making their way towards the Arch of Ctesiphon. If only the gunboats would now appear by the Arch ! But they were held up, and could not advance beyond Bustan. The Turkish heavy guns at the bottom of the river loop, installed on the right bank, kept them at a most respectful distance. Had they succeeded in passing and come up near Qusabah, how different things might have been ! It must not be inferred by this that I consider that they should have forced their way through. I am certain they did their duty, as the Navy always did most nobly, and the assistance they rendered and the share they took in my two former battles will have been seen. I have no doubt that the difficulties to be overcome were too serious to permit their advance on this occasion. The retreat of the Turkish troops of the left wing to the second position was being covered by very heavy and well sustained artillery fire from field guns, now installed in their second line, and especially from heavy guns on the right bank of the river near the boat-bridge, which enfiladed the advance of A Column in its assault on the second position, but did not check it. I had fixed Divisional Headquarters at " V.P." and the enemy's guns across the river paid me particular attention, for shells continued to burst all about me, and I had constantly to keep shifting my place and walking about to avoid them. Sir John Nixon and the Headquarter staff arrived at " V.P." about the time that the leading brigade, again the 30th Brigade of A Column, pierced the enemy's second position in an assault with the bayonet and took six to eight guns, for which honour Dorsets, Gurkhas and Punjabis all competed. The fact that the Dorsets were in front, and that they did not belong to the 30th Brigade, showed how mixed up the troops were by this time.

I was glad to be able to tell Sir John Nixon that everything was going well ; but now a change to our disadvantage took

place in the aspect of affairs. Hamilton sent a message to inform me that he was meeting with strenuous opposition. He could only advance with great difficulty. He had managed to reach the second position and had effected a lodgment, but now the enemy, in large numbers, were pressing him. I understood his message to read that he was checked and held up. The Cavalry Column under Melliss, on whom I had counted to keep off this counter-attack by the aid of his Horse Artillery and to enfilade the whole of the Turkish second position from its extreme left flank, had also met with serious difficulties. The cavalry dismounted to attack the left of the entrenchments, but had been able to make no progress, the Turkish reserve at Qusabah having occupied this part of the position. Melliss sent in the 76th Punjabis, who were in support of the cavalry, with the bayonet, and they carried their objective in fine style. One or two Turkish battalions ran away from the trenches, as the Punjabis advanced to the assault. The Cavalry Brigade had begun to work round the extremity of the second-line entrenchments, when they were vigorously counter-attacked in flank by large bodies of infantry advancing against Melliss' Column, which was in consequence pushed back practically to where it started from. This was the entry on the scene of the leading division of Khalil's Army Corps, which had been sent down from the Caucasus. It was regarded in the Turkish Army as a crack corps, and Khalil had a reputation as a thrusting commander. This new army corps was being sent down river from Baghdad by steamer and barges, and I take this to be the reason why no arrival of reinforcements to the enemy from Baghdad had been signalled to me by the air service, for my operation orders show that I had not overlooked this contingency. The Cavalry Brigade had 200 men killed and wounded out of some 1,200 sabres. The 76th Punjabis also lost severely, and their Colonel, Smithett, a very gallant officer, was killed at this juncture.

It was about 11 a.m. when Hamilton with the turning attack, which was headed by the Norfolks and the 110th Light Infantry (with the 7th Rajputs and 120th Infantry in support), managed to effect a lodgment in the second position of the Turks. He was soon held, and could advance no further. He had suffered severely, and he was soon counter-attacked by the Turks, rallied by the arrival of Khalil. The arrival of the latter saved Nureddin from defeat, and the Turks now took the counter-offensive in an attempt to throw the British out of the second position, in which our troops were now installing themselves.

It was just past midday, and all reports coming into the Divisional Headquarters at "V.P." clearly indicated that the enemy had received reinforcements and had assumed a general counter-offensive; while a violent bombardment of our troops

in the Turkish second position was maintained without relaxation, in which the heavy guns of the enemy on the right bank bore a prominent part. The wounded were coming back to the rear in large numbers, and I was much concerned to see that in many cases they were accompanied by unwounded combatants, in direct contradiction to my orders. This showed me that the casualties amongst officers must be great, and control was therefore being lost. I had given the same strict orders on this subject before the battle of Kut-al-Amara, where they were obeyed perfectly, for I did not lose many officers in that battle and so better control was kept. At this critical time I could do nothing to stop this, but it indicated to me clearly how badly things were going. Colonel Climo* was carried past me severely wounded in three places, but quite cheery. This gallant soldier would have been a great loss to me at any time, but at such a critical moment it was a disaster.

I had not a man left to throw into the Principal Mass. If I had had—I will not say the extra division that I needed—but even *another brigade*, we should have swept the Turks into the Tigris. This is a fact no one present at the battle can deny. It was hard to stand there and realise that victory was slipping from my grasp for the want of a few troops.

Now the plain became dotted with hundreds of our troops walking slowly back towards "V.P." It soon became apparent that a retirement was taking place, though no orders had been given for one. It was evident that all control must have been lost owing to very heavy casualties amongst the British officers of Indian units. Here were hundreds of Indian soldiers streaming to the rear, because there were not enough white officers to keep them steady and in hand. I utilised all my staff, and borrowed Sir John Nixon's—even General Kemball—to gallop about and lead, and even *drive*, the men back to the combat. Fine work these staff officers† did under the heavy fire, for I realised that, if I did not stop the wholesale retirement by some means or other, a veritable rout would set in. The same thing has often happened and will continue to happen at critical times in a battle, when the fire and losses are intense. It happened to our troops at the most critical time of the battle of the Alma, it happened at Inkerman, at how many battles of Wellington in the Peninsular? And on what a scale at Waterloo! It has happened in France in this war. There was nothing to be surprised at—the pity was I had no reserve to throw in. The sight of the other troops advancing would have made all these men turn and go back with them. However, I was not in a parlous state, though I had had great losses. I determined that at least I would hold the first position that I

* Now Major-General Climo.

† Including my friend of the cigarette incident of the night before, whom I took care to mention in despatches.

had taken, that I would bivouac on the field of battle and hope that the Turks, who had lost enormously, would retreat beyond the Diala in the night—and that is what happened. My 8,500 bayonets had driven four divisions of Turks, supported by a more numerous artillery than mine, out of a most strong defensive position, composed of a veritable network of modern redoubts, trenches, and communication ways, and there is *no soldier in Europe*—I underline that statement— to compare with the Turk when on the defensive and entrenched.

The German is supposed to be good on the defensive, but when in trenches he cannot compare with the Turk—as a proof of which I give the example of Gallipoli, where, owing to severe losses at one sector from the effects of the fire from our ships, the German troops would not remain, and had to be replaced by Turks. As can be easily imagined, I was not surprised that I could not make a decisive victory of Ctesiphon with 8,500 bayonets.

The Turkish infantry-man is a better fighter now than he was in the Turco-Russian War of 1877–78, where he was generally miserably led by officers ignorant of the smallest duties of company or battalion commanders. Their officers now are far better educated, and are all from the Military School, while the ranker class of 1877 has been eliminated. Last but not least, a large percentage of picked German officers served in Mesopotamia to keep the Turkish officers up to the mark. The war with Bulgaria, where the infantry behaved so badly, seems to have misled the whole of Europe as to the fighting powers of the Turk. Everyone in Turkey, every Turkish officer, will at once inform you that the reason for their defeat by the Bulgars was because all religious element had been stupidly disregarded by the " Young Turk " party, to which the Turkish Generals were compelled to belong ; and without the religious " touch " the Anatolian soldier, who is the flower of the Turkish army, would not fight. He does not and will not understand patriotism, nor does he care, I believe, for the *patrie*—but his religion in his life and world, and for that he will fight in the most dogged and tenacious manner. The Young Turkish party quickly recognised the error, and in this war appeals for the support of the *Tout puissant* were almost as common in the Turkish bulletins and *communiqués* as in the German.

When I think of what the Sixth Division did at Ctesiphon, the British battalions of which were only three in number, and of the strength of half battalions before going into battle, while the Indian battalions were composed in great part of raw recruits, I am not surprised that the Press at home called them the " Invincibles " ; and I am perfectly convinced that no body of men ever had harder fighting, be it in the Peninsular War, the Crimea, or even in the great war in France or Gallipoli.

I am certain that no body of troops has had a harder task to carry out, nor has had to face such great odds.

And I am also convinced that a solid General Reserve kept in the hand of the Commander-in-Chief in a battle is an absolute necessity.

The Staff Officers rallied numbers of men, pushing them, literally, back into the fight, but the result was a complete muddle of units now irretrievably mixed. A great percentage of our officers had fallen, striving by example to animate the troops to hold up against the Turkish counter-attack. Again I saw my troops begin slowly to fall back, followed by the Turks, who retook the captured guns, from which, however, our people removed the breech-blocks. The fire became more violent than ever.

As soon as I could get hold of Hoghton's brigade I sent it forward on the offensive, moving it south of Delamain's Principal Mass in retreat, in order to take the strain off him and to check the Turkish advance. In this I succeeded, for the retirement of the Principal Mass on the " V.P." redoubts and entrenchments was unmolested except by artillery fire. By now it must have been between 5.30 and 6 p.m. On the position we had captured I intended to stand, to unite all my force, to bivouac on the battle-field, reorganise units, and attack again next morning. Very likely, I thought—and told Sir John Nixon—the Turks, who have lost enormously (one division had been practically annihilated by Delamain's attack on "V.P.") would retire behind the Diala in the night. And it was so ; the enemy left me in possession of the battle-field, and we are taught in military history that a force which will not abandon the ground it has fought on will be finally considered victorious. Without molestation they allowed me to unite my shattered force into one block at " V.P." and its neighbourhood—no easy manœuvre, as will be admitted when the extent of the turning move, Melliss's and Hamilton's attacks, are looked at on the map. I was not easy in my mind till this union had taken place. I now realised by the streams of wounded brought to " V.P." and the shattered condition of the brigades—not one of which, I found later, was equal to the size of a British battalion on war strength—that I was in no condition to resume the offensive. Hoghton's brigade consisted of some 700 men of all units mixed up ; Delamain had about 1,000, he told me ; and Hamilton 800 or 900 men left. We had lost 4,000 killed and wounded out of 8,500 bayonets, for the whole loss was on the infantry, as is always the case when a position has to be taken. It was clear to me that I must take up a defensive attitude with my concentrated force, and await further developments, hoping that the Turks would retreat, owing to their terrible losses.

Having rallied and united my force at " V.P.," I took up a

defensive position in the entrenchments in that locality, with my right flank resting on " V.P. redoubt." Before I had fully realised the extent of my losses, however, and the disorder of brigades and units, I dictated this order :—

" The troops are to make good the position won to-day. The offensive will be continued to-morrow. C Column will instal itself in the entrenchments from " V.P." to one mile south, B Column will continue the line to the south, and A Column will defend the entrenchments towards the river."

I directed my G.S.O., I., to order the S.N.O. to advance his gunboats level with my left flank, and the O.C. Supply Column at Lajj to send me a food convoy on the morrow. As General Hoghton's Brigade-Major had been killed, I took Morland away from General Delamain and lent him to Hoghton.

However, on realising that night the shattered condition of my force, and considering the distance I was from home, I did not dare risk a reverse. There was no question, therefore, of a further offensive for the present. And so I modified my previous orders as follows :—

" G.O.C.'s Columns will reorganise as soon as possible. As soon as the reorganisation is complete, I shall take up a position with the division on the river further south, to water animals and men, replenish ammunition and food, bring up the ships, and evacuate wounded. The position of the division will roughly be Square H 9 to the dividing line between Squares H 6 and H 7 ; troops to be aligned on the already existing Turkish works and trenches."

The Turkish loss, I reflected, must be far greater than mine. Not only were the entrenchments about " V.P." literally choked with their dead, but also those of their second position, which we had been obliged to yield up. I knew that one Turkish division had been annihilated at " V.P.," and another in the second line. Surely they would retreat in the night " as soon as their wounds got stiff," as they did at Shaiba.

If I live a hundred years I shall not forget that night bivouac at " V,P." amongst hundreds of wounded, who were being brought in, loaded on the commissariat carts, by which they were collected for hours during the night. Their sufferings in these small, springless carts can be easily imagined ; but the way in which our medical officers worked is beyond all praise.

In the morning, aeroplane reconnaissance soon made me aware that the Turkish forces had retreated to the Diala river, seven or eight miles away, where they were seen busy digging in and improving the position behind the Diala that they had previously begun in that locality. A small rearguard detachment of one or two battalions was in the second position collecting wounded. They had also removed their boat-bridge at Qusabah, and it was seen being towed up river to the

Diala mouth. Thus all the right of the enemy's position about the Arch of Ctesiphon was evacuated.

I knew now that they had received large reinforcements and were preparing to give battle again on the defensive behind the Diala. Had I been in a condition to resume the offensive with boldness and vigour, it will be seen, by a glance at my project of operations drawn up at Azizieh, that I should, of course, have now transferred my force to the right bank and moved on Baghdad on that side of the river, thus compelling the Turks to quit the line of the Diala and fall back on that city. But daylight on 23rd November impressed me still more with the conviction of the hopelessness of resuming the offensive. Moreover, I must move—and speedily—on to the water, for neither animals nor men had received any (except in bottled) since leaving Lajj on the evening of the 21st ; a few horses only had been watered in the river near the Arch of Ctesiphon, which was now clear of enemy. No water can be found in this part of Mesopotamia away from the rivers, thus rendering turning manœuvres of any extent very difficult to execute.

In the morning of 23rd November, I accordingly shifted my position to a more southward part of the Turkish position—the troops being installed in a network of entrenchments. In front of us towered the great Arch of Ctesiphon, which in the time of the Romans stood within the walls of the city, about 2,000 yards away, with the tomb of the barber of the Prophet, Salman Pak, close by.

One thousand yards behind my position—where I placed a General Reserve—were the " High Walls of Ctesiphon." This consists of two sides of a square of very high mounds exactly like the remains of Roman camps in England and France, and is said to be the remains of the citadel of the Roman fortified town of Ctesiphon. The battle was fought on the actual site of the walled city of Ctesiphon, which the famous Belisarius, the last of the brilliant soldiers of the Roman Empire, then tottering to its end at Constantinople in the reign of Justinian, reached as his furthest point south in the course of his famous campaigns to recover Mesopotamia from the Persians. The trace of the first Turkish position was all along the foundations of the ancient wall, which from " V.P." trended away in small mounds to the northward.

The shifting of the Division was carried out in tranquillity, but to my extreme concern I had to leave C Column under Brigadier-General Hoghton at " V.P." owing to the slow evacuation of wounded to the High Wall of Ctesiphon. By sunset only half had been evacuated, although the utmost exertion and energy had been put into this vitally important matter. As the day came to a close I saw that this delay was of the gravest importance, for it would compel me to disseminate my small force. The Turks would have seen my

movement, and naturally would ascribe it to a retreat, for although I was not quitting the position, yet the movement of the carts between High Wall and "V.P." with wounded would be ascribed to a retirement. Therefore I expected to be attacked during the night, since I had to leave C Column, reduced to some 700 fighting men, plus a field battery, at "V.P." to guard the large numbers of wounded still at the redoubt. There was no help for it. All I could do was to hope the Turks would not move till the next morning, when I should be able to finish the evacuation of the wounded and bring off C Column to the new position by means of an offensive manœuvre with the bulk of my force.

Sure enough, in the evening, the Turks were seen advancing from the Diala in great masses. Now came a time of grave anxiety. I happened to have ridden to see the position General Delamain had taken up at the time the attack of the Turks was announced, and such was my anxiety that I decided to make my post with his command on the right of the line. Hamilton was on the left, Melliss with the General Reserve in the High Wall.

The enemy's Principal Mass attacked us with great violence at about 9 p.m. The night was very dark, and at least six attacks came on with the utmost fury, each being repulsed. At times groups of the enemy nearly succeeded in forcing their way into our trenches, so close did they get. The roar of musketry went on for hours and the expenditure of ammunition was a matter of the gravest concern and anxiety to Delamain and myself. The men were constantly being told to husband the ammunition, but the attacks had to be repelled, or all was over with us. I reinforced Delamain with the Norfolks, taken from Hamilton, as he was not severely pressed. As usual Delamain was worth his weight in gold, always calm, collected, business-like, and exercising absolute control—and all soldiers know the difficulty of control when fighting becomes almost hand-to-hand in trenches. In one place the Turks got into our trenches, but were bombed out again by the grenadiers of the Dorsets, leaving some twenty killed and wounded behind and a few unhurt prisoners, one of the latter, an Anatolian, being quite a giant. At one time some of the Indian soldiers began to quit the outer trenches, but Delamain rushed forward and rallied them back again into the abandoned trench. At another time the attack came so close that I thought the last moment had come, and instinctively unbuttoned the holster-flap of my pistol.

Throughout this trying night General Hoghton was a source of the greatest anxiety to me; his messages were frequent, and all to the effect that he feared he could hold out no longer. He was being attacked by the enemy's smaller column, and we could see the flashes lighting up the night all round "V.P."

and the replying flashes of our people in that redoubt. He said he was running out of ammunition ; his battery had only a few rounds left, and unless I could reinforce him he thought all would soon be over. My replies were always to the same effect : " You must hold on as you are ; we are being pressed more closely than you. To reinforce you is impossible ; I will extricate you to-morrow."

After some hours all was silent at " V.P." I could get no message through, and I feared the worst had happened, and felt the gravest anxiety for all the wounded at " V.P." But at last I received a message from Hoghton saying that the enemy had ceased their attacks. It was then about 2 a.m. I at once called for volunteers to go out from High Wall with the carts and take ammunition to Hoghton, and to bring in wounded from " V.P." This was most successfully and gallantly accomplished. It was even betting that they would be attacked on the way out, for the noise of the cart wheels jolting over the rough track could be heard as far off certainly as three or four thousand yards on a quiet night. That they were not cut up is due to the fact that the Turks had retired under cover of the darkness. The names of those who did this went in afterwards in my despatches, together with those of many others who performed most gallant actions in this, the most desperate fighting phase of the Ctesiphon operations.

When the morning of 24th November came there was no enemy in sight. Aerial reconnaissance reported his retreat again to the Diala, evacuating the wounded of the night before. I made an offensive manœuvre out to " V.P." in the meantime with the Reserve Brigade to bring in Hoghton's column and the wounded convoy to High Wall. I withdrew Delamain's and Hamilton's brigades, and in the early forenoon had my entire force united in my hand at High Wall, and all the wounded evacuated to Bustan, where they were put on the ships and sent off to Kut. I replenished ammunition, food and water for the force, and was again ready for all events. Thus all immediate anxiety was removed from my mind.

I could now give myself up to quiet thought and reflection concerning the position of my shattered force. From a strategical and tactical point of view, the situation was as bad as could possibly be imagined—that was evident. Never in the history of civilised warfare have we seen small unsupported bodies successfully opposed to large ones, except in savage warfare, or war in India and on its North-West frontier, and in Afghanistan, where the fundamental principles of war may sometimes be violated with impunity.

I knew that the next step of the enemy, with that overwhelming superiority of force, would naturally be to turn my position with his Principal Mass, and get astride my line of retreat, whilst he pinned me to my ground in front by an

attack with a minimum force. That is what I should have done from the commencement of the counter-offensive, had I been the Turkish Commander-in-Chief; and I should never have expended my men in a hazardous night attack on the British entrenched front. His great superiority of numbers easily permitted such a manœuvre, executed by night so as to conceal the turning movement. I saw that I should have to retire, in spite of political reasons. I was sufficiently a student of military history to know that once a general permits political reasons to interfere with strategical ones, that general is lost. All military history proves it.

Full of these thoughts I arrived at High Wall, and found that Sir John Nixon and his staff had left for Kut. He had left General Kemball, his Chief of Staff, to have a talk with me. I told him what I intended to do—that I was not going to let political reasons endanger the force; if it were annihilated the whole of Mesopotamia would fall like a ripe plum into the hands of the Turks. But I was not going to retire a moment before it became necessary to do so, and I sent out aerial and cavalry reconnaissances to determine what the Turks were doing. They were certainly not going to retire from the Diala, and, whilst parties were burying our dead within a radius of two miles, I occupied myself in thinking out my position and in installing the troops at High Wall in the best possible manner for defence. We were being shelled intermittently by the big Turkish guns in position at the bottom of the loop of the river, on the right bank of the Tigris. I now learnt that it was the fire of these particular guns which had prevented the naval flotilla from advancing beyond Bustan during the battle of 22nd November, so that their co-operation had been forcedly confined to long and distant fire instead of co-operation at effective and even close ranges, as had been the case at the battles of Kurna and Kut-al-Amara. What would not have been the result if they could have appeared on the river at the southern end of the Turkish second-line position at the moment when I was attacking it with the infantry? Victory would not then have been in doubt. There would have been no rally of the defeated Turkish troops. The rout must have continued to the Diala, where their only boat-bridge would have been rammed and destroyed. It will be seen by reference to the map how, in addition to the Turkish big guns, the enemy's works and entrenchments also enfiladed the gunboats' line of approach at a range of under 1,000 yards. I had reckoned on the flight of the Turkish troops composing this wing directly I had overwhelmed the left flank of it at "V.P."; but as a matter of fact the bulk remained at their posts till nightfall.

We sustained very little loss on 24th November from the distant fire of the Turkish big guns, though it was quite accurate, and the High Wall of Ctesiphon made a most conspicuous

target. But we were lucky. Although they pitched their shells into the terrain occupied by the troops, it was extraordinary how many horses, mules and men were *not* hit. An officer of R.E. was killed—and I had a sufficiently near squeak of it whilst shaving, a shell passing just over me and half smothering me in a tremendous cloud of dust when it struck the ground and exploded.

I deliberated whether I should send the cow guns to take on these guns, silence them, and thus enable my gunboats to pass the lines of Ctesiphon at its southern extremity ; but my dangerous flank was the northern one. By this I should eventually be turned by the enemy, who would march straight on Lajj. I had made up my mind that I should have to retire at least to that place, and again I might at any moment expect to hear that the Turks were advancing from the Diala. I realised that if pinned again to the ground by the enemy in an attack in great numbers it would mean the end of the Sixth Division, which had reached its limit of endurance.

The day of the 24th and night of the 24th-25th was quiet. On fully considering matters I decided to retire leisurely to Lajj on the morning of 26th November, and indicated my orders to my G.S.O., I., on the morning of the 25th, regrouping the reduced division into two Columns only :—A Column, General Delamain, comprising the 16th and 18th Infantry Brigades, and B Column, General Sir Charles Melliss, comprising the 30th and 17th Infantry Brigades. This regrouping was necessary owing to the heavy losses, which had reduced each of the brigades to the strength of a British battalion. The Cavalry Brigade, under Brigadier-General Roberts, of course remained unchanged.

Preliminary Order issued to the Division :—

" 25th November, 1915.

" The Division will hold itself in readiness to march to Lajj, some 6 miles, at about 2 p.m. to-morrow, 26th November.

" The Divisional Train is to hold itself in readiness to march the moment ordered.

" Complete orders will follow later."

At first I intended to move the main body in two columns abreast, in order to facilitate manœuvre if attacked, but I found that the terrain is so thickly scrubbed and bushed between Lajj and Ctesiphon that I decided to move in one column, covered by Column A, under General Delamain, as rearguard, with the divisional artillery to keep the enemy at a respectful distance. The Cavalry Brigade was also attached to the rearguard.

CHAPTER XI

THE RETIREMENT TO KUT

On November 25th, 1915, I issued my orders for the retirement to Lajj, and also two *communiqués* to the British and Indian troops composing the division, with the object of keeping up their *moral* during the retreat—that most difficult of all military operations in which, as past military history shows, the British soldier is very prone to get out of hand.

Even knowing my command as well as I did, I considered it necessary to speak confidentially to the men as to our situation, and to appeal indirectly to their sympathy and their common sense—and thus to obtain hearty co-operation, and consequently perfect discipline. I hoped also that the *communiqués* would establish confidence and silence "croakers," of whom, experience has taught me, some are always to be found in any fairly large body of men.

Communiqué to the Indian Troops.

"To be explained carefully by Commanding Officers to the Indian Officers to communicate to their men.

"It must be fully understood by the troops that the reason why I am moving back to Lajj is because of the food question. There is a road from Baghdad, which comes in between us here and Lajj, where the enemy could with guns stop my ships. I do not want my troops to be starved nor to make them live in constant want of water. In short it is *akal ki bat* (question of food) which takes us back to Lajj. Many troops, who are coming from France and will reach Basra in a week or ten days' time, will join this force to take Baghdad."

Communiqué to British and Indian Troops.

"Sir John Nixon has expressed in his Army Order his sentiments in the very words I would have chosen myself. I cannot express my admiration and gratitude for the heroism displayed by all ranks. To show with what stern valour you fought, you drove four divisions out of a very strong position and forced them to retire beyond the Diala River. But our numbers were too few to put them to rout; we have had 4,000 men killed and wounded, the Turks losing many more than this figure. You have added a brilliant page to the glorious battle roll of the Army in India, and you will be proud to tell them at home that you fought at the battle of Ctesiphon.

"The troops must know that I have ordered a move back to Lajj for the following reasons:

"(1) Food and supply question. The ships are exposed to fire on the river at Bustan, and the enemy can with cavalry accompanied by guns stop their progress up river to opposite this camp.

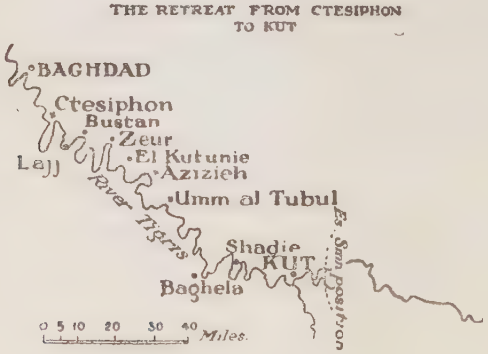
"(2) At Lajj I can await in security the arrival of reinforcements at Basra from France and Egypt due in a week's time.

"The ships at Lajj are in security.

"Three more monitors are promised to me in a few days."

In the afternoon, as I anticipated, aerial reconnaissance reported the advance of three large columns, estimated at one division each, from the Diala moving south towards us; another large column was marching separately to the north-eastward, moving evidently to execute the turning manœuvre I had expected. It was further reported that the Principal Mass of the enemy had halted in the evening, reoccupying the Turkish second position.

I saw that I must retreat this night (25th November) if I did not wish to be hooked on to and turned. Accordingly orders were issued confidentially to all brigade commanders and heads of departments to start the march twelve hours sooner than the time mentioned in my original orders.



I marched at 8.30 p.m. in one column. The rearguard followed quietly behind without a single shot, although the enemy were close at hand. The manœuvre was carried out with precision and silence, and the night march was executed under good conditions. In the neighbourhood of Bustan, where we touched the river, we came across several boxes of small-arm ammunition lying here and there about the road, which seemed to indicate a panic amongst the transport drivers* of the Divisional Train, who may have seen Arab horsemen.

* I ascertained afterwards that this had been the case.

The rearguard halted and collected most of the boxes, which were put on board a gunboat we discovered lying close to the bank. At one of our hourly halts in the night, I was standing and talking with some of the Staff when I saw in the moonlight ten or twelve horsemen galloping towards us from the desert. They evidently thought we were some of the convoy and galloped, yelling, almost into us. A section of infantry had to open fire, and they turned about and galloped off.

On arrival at Lajj early in the morning of 26th November, in drizzling rain, I sent the following telegram to the Army Commander, who had gone to Kut-al-Amara :—

" I adhere very strongly to my telegram of 25th November. I consider that with 4,500 casualties, which is the total, and where the brigades are reduced to little more than a full-strength British battalion, it would be madness to have remained at Ctesiphon a moment longer than I did. At 4 p.m. yesterday three large Turkish columns, estimated by the air service at 5,000 each, were advancing from their entrenched line covering the Diala north of Qusabah, and at 5 p.m. were in sight, moving along the river bank, one at a turning distance inland, whilst a hostile cavalry brigade menaced Bustan (on my line of retreat). There is no question of my engaging such a force in my present state, with the men worn out. So I waited till darkness and moved off in the dark to Lajj, where I am entrenching and going to make myself comfortable. Remember you agreed before to my Lajj reasons. I endeavoured to impose on them at Ctesiphon and I flatter myself that I extricated my force under good conditions of manœuvre, the hardest that can be imagined. Had I been attacked in the middle of such an operation I should have been pinned down by one column and turned and cut off by the other column. You must know what the result would have been. I know well. Here I remain and demonstrate up right bank almost immediately."

I wired further :—" Air service reports that the enemy has reoccupied the second line of entrenchments at Ctesiphon and are advancing. I do not think they will venture to cross the open and attack me without their beloved entrenchments. I hope you will approve of what I have done to the best of my judgment. Nothing will alter my opinion that I have acted for the best. Troops sent up to Kut-al-Amara will keep Arabs (on line of communications) tranquil, but I want a post at Jumeisa—a battalion and a couple of post guns to ensure free passage of river defiles for boats."

On 27th November at Lajj, I telegraphed in the morning to the M.G.G.S., that I was roughly entrenching a camp at Lajj. By this I meant light entrenchments merely to give camp security, and I told him I had thrown a bridge across, with a *tête du pont* occupied by half a battalion. I said that I did not require any more supplies or engineer stores sent up to

Lajj (I had ten days' supplies for British troops and seven for the Indian troops there), as I desired to concentrate our force for the advance on Baghdad at Azizieh and not Lajj. The latter place was much too close to the enemy, and one should concentrate to the rear and not to the front. The enemy would never permit me to remain at Lajj unmolested. Azizieh was a more desirable place in every way, and I intended to march there as soon as I had eaten up my supplies. I supposed, I said, that I should have two divisions to advance with, and I asked him to give me some indications as to the date when the force could be concentrated. The shipping question would be a difficult one, and I imagined that it would be late in December before we could advance. I asked how long it would take to equip the new division with the peculiar means of transport obtaining in Mesopotamia, and said that it would appear that at least two and a half months were required for this. Finally I pointed out that Lajj camp would be under water at the end of January, and, I believed, Azizieh also. Thus every reason indicated Kut as my final halt.

No sooner had I sent the above telegram when an air service reconnaissance indicated the approach of the enemy in strength from Ctesiphon on Lajj, estimating his force at 12,000 infantry in two columns, and 400 cavalry. This was the advanced guard of the Turkish 6th Army. I decided to fall back the same afternoon on Azizieh and to do the twenty-two miles in one march. I began to see that there was no halting on the Baghdad side of Kut-al-Amara, if the enemy really intended an offensive with large forces. If he once hooked on to my little force I should be pinned down and surrounded. Basra was a long way from Lajj, and I knew that no reinforcements could reach me before late in December. I immediately dictated to my G.S.O., I., the following preliminary order for retirement :—" The Division will hold itself in instant readiness to march to Azizieh, preceded by the Divisional Train :—

Rear Guard ..	16th and 18th Brigades Divisional Artillery Cavalry Brigade	} General Delamain.
Main Body ..	(1) 30th Brigade	
In two columns abreast.	(2) 17th Brigade Divisional Troops	

Escort to Divisional Train—1 battalion—the train to precede the Division by one mile distance.

Ship Convoy—under escort of the Naval Flotilla—will move when ready to Azizieh."

I moved off in the afternoon in two columns, covering the move of the ships. The enemy was only some three and a half miles distant when my columns moved off.

I marched through the night *viâ* Zeur and El Kutunie to Azizieh, where I halted during 28th and 29th November.

There I was glad to find the 14th Hussars and half a battalion of West Kents (belonging to the 12th Division) sent up to reinforce me.

Just before moving from Lajj I received a telegram from the M.G.G.S., in answer to mine of 27th November :—

"Army Commander entirely approves your proposals and leaves decisions to you on the spot. He knows you will not retire without reason. We hope to have the leading troops of 28th (Indian) Brigade up with you by 15th December, and to follow them up with 24th and 25th Brigades. The two divisions will be concentrated forward as soon as possible."

I wired to M.G.G.S., informing him of the above move in retirement to Azizieh by a night march, and the reason of it, and added : "My air service reports on morning of 28th November formation of large camps at Ctesiphon. One column was moving into Lajj and the other column had turned Lajj by way of the desert."

I followed this wire up by another to the M.G.G.S. :

"It seems abundantly clear that the enemy received large reinforcements prior to battle of Ctesiphon. The troops reported in my 18 G of to-day appear to me to be the advanced guard of an Army Corps. I expect he will advance to Zeur, but if he moves from that place to attack me here I shall again refuse battle and fall back to Kut-al-Amara in all probability, as Kut is a strategic point we are bound to hold, and is a concentration zone for the reinforcements coming from over seas. My principal objective is to gain time for the concentration of these reinforcements and I must avoid battle for the present, using Fabian tactics. Should he follow me to Kut, so much the better. We ought to destroy him in that case, but personally I do not think he will fight below Zeur, so far away from his beloved entrenchments at Ctesiphon. The further we get him from Baghdad the more chance in the next battle of our knocking him out altogether. At Kurna we defeated Arab troops with a reserve of Turks ; at the Battle of Kut-al-Amara regular Turkish battalions stiffened the Arab battalions—now we have the Turkish soldier alone. Hence the battles get more and more hard fought."

At Azizieh I evacuated all wounded and accumulated stores on board the *Mejidieh* and her two barges, which sailed for Kut on 29th November.

A high wind had prevented aerial reconnaissance till the afternoon, but it was discovered later that the enemy's advanced guard, a column about a mile long, occupied El Kutunie, six miles distant, on this date. Their main body was reported at Zeur. The gunboat *Shaitan*—which had been beached near El Kutunie to prevent it sinking, as a plate had opened—had to be abandoned under a heavy hostile artillery fire. The gun and machine-gun on her were saved, the vessel being scuttled

and the essential parts of machinery removed. Thus ended the career of the plucky little *Shaitan*, an armoured tug-boat, which had borne such a distinguished part in all the combats on the Tigris since the beginning of the campaign. I sent the Cavalry Brigade to drive off the Arabs, who from the left bank were subjecting the naval crew working on the *Shaitan* to a heavy fire. The 14th Hussars and the 7th Lancers charged, and accounted for about 140 Arabs, who fled in all directions. The advent of the 14th Hussars (British) had put new spirit and dash into the Indian cavalry.

On arriving at Azizieh I had been disagreeably surprised to find only six days' supplies there, instead of the twenty days' British and seven days' Indian I had reckoned on. On 29th November, I evacuated the sick and wounded on board the *Mejidieh*. My A.D.C., Captain Bastow, was ill with dysentery, and I sent him off with this convoy. I also destroyed all stores and clothing which I could not take with me. I intended to retreat, but held on all the 29th in hopes of saving the clothing and equipment. I had asked for a steamer, the *Blosse Lynch*, and two barges to come from Kut for this purpose, but she did not arrive, and thus I had no alternative but to destroy. The ammunition I saved by loading it on ships.

I issued a preliminary order at midday :—

" The Division will hold itself in readiness to move south-east. The Divisional train and Supply Column—48th Pioneers. The Ship Convoy to sail at 10 a.m., 30th November."

The complete orders which followed were pencilled in my note-book as follows :—

" Information *re* the enemy has been imparted to G.O.C. Brigades. The Division will march to Umm-al-Tubul, a distance of ten miles, in one column, to-morrow, 30th November.

Time of March	9 a.m.
Starting Point ..	S.E. Exit of Camp.
Advanced Guard	1 Company from 30th Brigade.
Main Body in order of march. ..	30th Brigade. 17th Brigade. 16th Brigade. Divisional Troops.
Rear Guard. .. Gen. Hamilton.	18th Brigade. plus 1 battery R.F.A. Cavalry Brigade.
Divisional H.Q.	At tail of Main Body."

It should be explained that my reason for making this short march to Umm-al-Tubul was because the Senior Naval Officer, Captain Nunn, R.N.* said that the navigation of the river was so difficult in its shallow state, especially in some of the bends in the Umm-al-Tubul locality, that this place was the

* This officer, whose services had been so valuable to me in the Kurna-Amarah operation, did not join my force till the retirement on Kut.

limit of their possible journey that day. If I went further than Umm-al-Tubul some of the ships aground would surely fall into the hands of the enemy. Thus it will be seen that, owing to the ships, I was about to be overtaken by the enemy and forced to fight a battle. If I had not had to guard the ships, I should have made a twenty or twenty-four mile march, and should never have been hooked on to.

Later on in the day, I received a message from the M.G.G.S. from Kut, where he was with Sir John Nixon, asking what troops I could spare to enable the line of communications to be re-opened,* and when they could reach Kut. He also asked if I could spare an aeroplane to carry out a reconnaissance of Sheikh Saad on the morrow.

This was very serious news. It was no time for me to disseminate even one rifle from my small force with the enemy on my heels. But it was absolutely imperative to turn out the detachment of Turks and Arabs who were sitting astride our communications. I hoped not to give battle in my retreat, though the enemy were very near me. So I replied that I was sending Melliss and the 30th Brigade in advance of me to Kut by forced marches to deal with the situation he had described. It was lamentable having to disseminate at such a time, but I saw no help for it. I also ordered the following preliminary measures to the retreat orders :—

I recalled the half battalion from the right bank guarding the bridge-head, and dismantled the boat-bridge during the night of 29th-30th November. I ordered the Divisional Train and Supply Column to be loaded up, in instant readiness to move when ordered on 30th November.

Troops were to be kept in a state of constant readiness.

The river section of 5-in. guns on barges, towed by the *Shushan* and *Mahsoudieh*, were to start at daylight on the 30th for Kut. The barbed wire was to be removed from the entrenchments at Azizieh and thrown into the river.

The ships were to sail at daylight on the 30th, under convoy of the *Comet* and *Firefly* gunboats.

The above measures were carried out, and, at 9 a.m. on the 30th, the Division marched from Azizieh southward. The burning of the storehouse of clothing and equipment, and the reserve barge of aviation bombs, caused a column of smoke which must have been plainly visible to the enemy at El Kutunie.

The march of the division to Umm-al-Tubul, where we arrived about midday, was effected with no incident worth mentioning. The enemy were reported to have reached Azizieh, and I was much relieved at the safe arrival of the ship convoy in the afternoon, for the reach just above that place is one of the worst in the river at this season of the year for

* This was the first I had heard of their being cut.

shallow water and constantly shifting shoals. In accordance with my promise, which I could not help but regret, I ordered Melliss with the 30th Brigade to continue his march and to proceed to Kut independently. It was arranged that he should halt about ten miles down river; and I issued the following orders regarding halt, bivouac and security arrangements :—

" 1. No fresh information *re* enemy.

2. The Division will bivouac in the zones already allotted to brigades—Divisional Troops, Train and Supply Column—the troops in readiness for action and bivouacking in their battle positions.

3. Service of protection of rest and security:—

Battle outposts.* Each G.O.C. Brigade responsible for his front (the firing line taking the place of picquets, sentry groups thrown forward).

The Cavalry to ensure the service of security by day.

4. The troops to stand to arms one hour before daylight.

5. S.N.O. to place a gunboat in position so as to flank the up-river front of the Division in bivouac."

According to my custom when there is any possibility of fighting, I did not go to sleep. At about 9 p.m. we were shelled by what I took to be camel corps guns. They gave us a few rounds only—it may be half a dozen—and then there was silence. This served us well, for it put all the troops on the alert. Delamain and I both thought we could hear the noise of cart-wheels in the distance—either that or gun-wheels. Gradually I became convinced it was the latter, which meant that the entire Turkish force must be at hand. I had been taken by the collar by having to guard the ships. I realised that it would be impossible to get off my unwieldy train and supply column, with all the Indian followers, in the middle of the night, in a country thick with scrub and following a track which could only be seen in daylight. Nor could the ships attempt to move till day.

I dictated operation orders to my G.S.O., I. :—

" 9.15 p.m. If the enemy are found to be close at hand on my front, I shall attack them at daylight by a frontal and enveloping attack combined.

Frontal attack. 18th Brigade. General Hamilton.

Enveloping attack. 16th and 17th Brigades. General Delamain.

I shall decide as soon as I can see as to giving the objective to the two commanders.

The Cavalry Brigade will co-operate on the exterior flank of the enveloping attack.

G.O.C.'s brigades to push forward patrols at dawn."

The Train and Supply Column I ordered to be loaded up

* As the enemy might be expected to attack and the country was thickly covered with scrub.

and standing by in readiness for the march as soon as it was light enough to see.

I passed a very anxious night. I determined to recall Melliss with the 30th Brigade, as I needed every rifle to win this battle and to extricate myself from the clutch of the enemy.

I accordingly sent Melliss an urgent message by two British officers of the 7th Lancers, Indian Cavalry, Captain C. Trench and Lieutenant W. J. Coventry, who gallantly volunteered. I told them that I knew of the great risk they were running, as Arab horsemen must be all around, and also that I should recommend them for the V.C.* On the success of their mission the fate of the Division probably rested. They took half a dozen sowars with them, and started at about 3 a.m.

I also sent for Captain Nunn, the S.N.O., to inform him of events, and gave him a duplicate message to send in a launch down river to Melliss at once. He was to get his convoy under way at daylight, and start down river, leaving a gunboat to co-operate with fire against the enemy's flank. The message, taken by Lieutenant Wood, R.N.R., did not get through, Arabs opening fire on his launch and wounding two men.

The messages to Sir Charles Melliss were to the effect that I feared I had been overtaken by the enemy. He was to march back to my assistance, keeping well away from the river in order to make a turning manœuvre and attack the enemy pressing me. I felt fairly confident that *if* my messages got through, I should defeat the enemy by this manœuvre, or at least extricate my force. Melliss had ten miles to march back.

There were no further sounds in the night—no lights or fires, only a dead silence. I sent for G.O.C.'s brigades at 5 a.m. to explain verbally once more my intention of making a vigorous attack. This was to be a frontal attack combined with an envelopment of the enemy's left flank, in which the Cavalry Brigade would co-operate on the exterior flank, and charge on the first opportunity. I told them also of my expedited orders to recall Melliss.

When daylight came on 1st December I expected to see the Turks entrenching or entrenched close at hand, for they dig in as quickly as moles. I did not believe they would advance to give me the shock. But I was mistaken.

As soon as it got light enough to see, there was plenty of excitement for all of us. The Turks, whom we estimated at nothing under 12,000 men, were advancing in long lines in extended order and had reached close field-artillery range—say 2,500 yards. Their left wing, I saw, was executing an envelopment around us. I at once ordered the artillery to open rapid fire and ordered Delamain and Hamilton to attack according to orders, whilst I sent off three or four gallopers to the cavalry, instructing them to envelop that wing of the

* These officers received the D.S.O.

enemy which was closing in on me, and to charge it. I have never seen artillery shoot with the precision of the 10th Brigade, R.F.A., which opened a rapid fire. This was most deadly. One saw the Turkish lines of men dissolve in a regular cloud of our shells. What a splendid gun is our 18-pounder field-gun!

Meanwhile, Delamain and Hamilton advanced with the infantry. Owing to my offensive move I saw the enveloping attack halt, hesitate,* and come to a wobbly sort of stand which looked like becoming a bolt if they were menaced.

The Cavalry Brigade rapidly and brilliantly carried out my orders. Their Horse Artillery battery—the famous S battery—came into action from a ridge against the flank of the enemy's attack, whilst the Brigade itself galloped to some rising and dominating ground, where they dismounted and started rifle fire. Very soon we saw the enemy's enveloping attack completely upset and running in great disorder. Everywhere they began to fall back—covering their retreat, however, with a very violent shell-fire which inflicted considerable damage on us. Many the shaves we of the Divisional Staff had, while standing near the guns. One or two drivers of one of the batteries were knocked out of their saddles by the shrapnel within a few yards of the place where I was standing. Common shell and shrapnel were exploding all about the place, I could see shells bursting over the long column of the divisional train and supply column, now in full retreat.

Seeing the enemy's enveloping attack in retreat and their other troops beginning to fall back, I seized the opportunity to break off the combat, sending orders to Delamain and Hamilton to retire in alternate echelons of brigades, though I was much tempted to order a general advance.

We were under a very severe shell fire; but I have never seen—even in peace manœuvres—a retirement carried out better, both as regards steadiness and suppleness in manœuvre than was executed by the Sixth Division at this critical moment. The sight of the brigades falling back steadily in echelon, with the precision of clockwork, and the gradual development into one steady flow of retreat in perfect order—guns, everything, in their proper places—filled me with pride. Shall I ever have such a command again, I thought?

What would have happened if I had not had those perfect Brigade Commanders? There is no doubt that the most severe selection should be exercised for promotion to Brigadier-General, but I have never understood why in the British Army we have always had a more strict selection in promoting from Brigadier-General to Major-General. If a man is a good Brigadier-General he is a good divisional commander, for I

* Turkish officers who were present told me that their losses were terrible at this moment. Our artillery fire paralysed all movement.

have always declared, and shall continue to do so, that it is easier to command a division than a brigade, as you have more units with which to manœuvre. The same applies to the command of an army corps. It is easier to fight an independent battle, having an army corps of two divisions at your disposal, than to command a division only.

In the middle of issuing orders for the retreat, my attention was drawn to one of the gunboats—the *Comet*—aground and in flames. She was an old wooden paddle-wheel river-steamer, fitted up with a few iron plates to cover the bridge and a few plates on the forecastle to shield the gun's crew from rifle bullets. It will be remembered that it was on board her that I had received the Turkish commander's surrender at Amarah.

The *Firefly* had also had a shell through her boiler, totally disabling her. I could see her funnel and fighting-top over the edge of the river bank some 2,000 yards up river. The enemy's guns were firing heavily on both boats, and there was no possibility of helping them, but the crews managed to get away in their boats. The *Firefly* was a serious loss. She was the first of the new river monitors and carried a 4.7 inch gun.*

It must have been about 7.30 a.m. when we began to retire. Although the enemy continued to shell at long range he only followed up with his cavalry for a short time. We lost some 500 men killed and wounded in this engagement. We had not lost a gun, or a prisoner. I had all the Turkish prisoners—about 1,500 of them—taken at Ctesiphon marching with the Divisional train and supply column.

About 9 a.m. General Melliss with the 30th Brigade met my column on the march. He had marched at daylight rapidly to my assistance and well inland from the river. I was glad to see him, although he was too late for the battle. The Arab horsemen must have reported his approach to the enemy and this, together with their losses, I expect caused the Turks to halt at Umm-al-Tubul.

In this battle I may have played too near the flame, but it was not my fault. That I was forced to fight was due to having to guard the ships, which, in these difficult bends and shallows, could move only by day. But, owing to the high quality of the troops, unshaken by the fierce fighting they had undergone in the Battle of Ctesiphon, and—I repeat again—to my exceptional Brigade Commanders, I was able to extricate myself with ease from the grip of the pursuing columns. To break off a battle and retreat is the most difficult of all operations, even when you command fresh troops; but it is much more difficult when your troops are stale and war-worn, and have been subjected to very hard fighting—and the trial at Ctesiphon was no ordinary one in that direction. If your troops are disorganised, it is impossible to retreat methodically by a

* She was recaptured at Baghdad in March, 1917.

manœuvre such as I executed—a movement in echelons of brigades. The critical moment comes when you quit your positions, when your deployed formation must be changed into march formation. You must obtain some respite to be able to do this.

In order to obtain this respite I carried out a predetermined offensive movement. This menace has often been, and will often be, successful at such moments. It was in this way that MacMahon, at the moment he was beginning his retreat on 6th August, 1870, imposed on the Germans by an offensive movement carried out by General Pelle's division against the village of Froeschwiller.

It was in the same way also that General Chanzy, on 11th December, 1870, managed to begin his famous retreat to the Loire. The Germans thought his manœuvre indicated an offensive return, and never till midday rose to the fact that the forces of Chanzy were in full retreat.

In the conduct of rearguard fighting, artillery and cavalry are your principal arms; your infantry should act only as a support to the artillery, and should only be engaged in extremity or in the utmost necessity. Once the rearguard infantry permits pursuing infantry to approach within 1,000 yards, which was effective rifle range in such open and flat country as we were in, then it is pinned and cannot retire, which is the reason why such large numbers of prisoners are generally lost in retreats. Moreover, once pursuing infantry gets within 1,000 yards of your guns, the limbers cannot be brought up, if the ground is open.

I continued the march all day. I was determined not to halt till I reached Shadie, thirty-six miles away. The rearguard cavalry constantly exchanged shots with Arab horsemen, who hung on our rear flanks. I would not have a long halt, for it was absolutely necessary to put such a distance between us and the enemy as would enable me to rest the force for a night, and then move the next day into Kut itself. In the afternoon I constantly travelled up and down the column, talking to officers and men here and there, to show all that I was quite cheery. The troops were very tired, but in good spirits.

Towards sunset, when the column was traversing the top of one of the many serpentine bends of the Tigris, one or two of the brigadiers asked me if I would not halt, since the troops were dead beat.* But I did not dare to, for, as I said, "Once these men get down to the river bank, we shall not collect them for hours. They will lie by the water, drink, and fall asleep like logs. I do not know that the Turks are not a few miles behind."

* There was a lot of falling out, the men being put on carts which I had ordered to march with the rearguard for this purpose. If anyone fell behind the rearguard his throat was at once cut by the Arabs.

The Arab horsemen continued always to hang on to our rear. "Forward" was the word; and so we continued through the night. It must have been nine o'clock when the head of the column reached Shadie. We had marched thirty-six miles, including the battle in the morning, and I call that a record march. Melliss's brigade had gone about five miles more, since they had retraced their steps to assist me in the battle. The troops were utterly tired out. They lay down on the road in column and slept in the ranks as they were—and I had *no food* to distribute!

The ships were at Shadie, and I went on board the *Mejidieh*, and learnt that a barge, full of sick and wounded, shipped at Azizieh, had grounded a short distance from Umm-al-Tubul, and had been captured by the enemy, as they could not get the barge off, in spite of the greatest efforts. I heard details from the S.N.O. also about the *Firefly*. She had grounded on a mud-bank and, when trying to get off, got a shell through her boiler. The *Comet* went to her assistance, but was hulled several times by shells—being set on fire in consequence and rendered unmanageable. Both were abandoned by Captain Nunn. An aviation store-barge and another of supplies with sick men, British and Indian soldiers unable to march, on board, were also lost on the shoals.

I ordered the march to be resumed at daylight on 2nd December. No enemy were in sight, as I watched the column move out, standing on the high banks of a water-cut, and having a good look round with binoculars. The troops seemed very tired and fagged after their thirty-six mile march, with no food! But I hoped they would warm up as the day progressed—they were naturally very stiff at first. The march was a very painful one, and towards midday the men fell out in scores. I had placed all the transport carts available at the tail of the main body, and some carts with the rearguard itself for this purpose. The Arab horsemen, as on the day before, hung on to the skirts of the column, our march being accompanied by a continuous dropping fire of musketry. I refused to make any halt during the morning—I did not dare to—for I was afraid the men would simply lie down where they stood and sleep like logs for hours.

At 1 p.m. I halted for two hours at a convenient bend of the river, sending on the divisional train and supply column to Kut with Colonel Chitty, with orders to send out food to meet the column at the place I intended to halt at that night—Shumran Bend, six miles west of Kut. The troops were heartened by the news of food being sent to meet them, and the march was continued.

The G.O.C. at Kut, Brigadier-General Rimington, R.E., rode out and met me at this halt, bringing me the following wires from the M.G.G.S.:—

" November 30th, 1915.

" Your suggestion to retire slowly on Kut approved. Army Commander very pleased to hear of successful charge of 14th Hussars and 7th Lancers on 29th.

" He is also very grateful for your ready assistance in sending Melliss's column to deal with situation on Lines of Communication pending return of General Headquarters and L.G.C. to Basra. Gorringe has been ordered there to organise despatch of reinforcements, for which it is essential that our shipping be got back to Basra earliest opportunity. Has Melliss got wireless with him ? "

" December 1st, 1915.

" I congratulate you most sincerely on the splendid resistance you have made. Am deeply concerned and feel that the best way in which I can assist you is to clear away all shipping and wounded from here with escort, wing 66th, one double coy. Hants, 2 mountain guns, to break our way through at Orah. These will be left at Kut : Troop 14th Hussars, wing 66th, one double coy. Hants and some 800 convalescents capable of using a rifle. Am leaving Kut this afternoon."

The G.O.C. Kut arrived at about the same time as his telegram. This said that he found it very difficult to " make an entrenched defensive position covering Kut which cannot be turned. Enemy will certainly surround us in a very confined camp and will hold us with a small force while he will occupy Essinn position against our reinforcements. Alternative would be to retire on Essinn.* There are about thirty mahelas here, on which, if you decide to evacuate Kut, we can place wounded and supplies."

I told General Rimington that I had determined to stand at Kut itself. Moreover, my force was too exhausted to move a yard further at the moment. It was an impossibility to move all the supplies and ammunition in time. Kut is a most important strategic point. To leave it would enable the enemy to despatch troops down to Nasiriyeh by utilising the Hai River for the transport of munitions and supplies. If he moved his whole force there, Basra would be menaced. It was not till this day that I heard that the towing launch had had to abandon a part of our bridge train between Umm-al-Tubul and Shadie. This was indeed a great loss.

The column reached Shumran at dusk on 2nd December, but the rearguard, under Hoghton, did not arrive till much later, owing to the difficulty of getting along the stragglers. No man was left behind the rearguard, though perhaps in one or two cases a few Indian soldiers and followers may have lain down tired out under some bush to sleep, and so got left behind ; but no case was ever reported to me. It is certain,

* The site of my battle in September, 1915, but on the opposite, the right, bank.

however, that a few native followers did this and were cut up by the Arab horsemen. A German artillery Colonel at Aleppo, who had been with the Turkish advanced guard in these operations, told me he saw some bodies of Indians who had been killed by the Arabs ; and in one case half a dozen dead English soldiers who had been stripped naked and their throats cut by the Arabs. These poor fellows were amongst the sick on the barge which ran aground and was captured. Some of the men managed to get ashore and made a run for it, trying to catch up the column on the march ; and one or two actually joined us in this way.

Throughout my operations in Mesopotamia, I ever found the Arabs merciless and cowardly scoundrels. Witness their conduct after the battle of Kurna in the pursuit to Amarah, when Turkish soldiers were murdered on all sides. The Arab goes with whichever side he thinks is winning, The Turks know how to treat them, and give them short shrift.

We marched into Kut early next morning, 3rd December, the Turkish force reaching Shadie on the same day. On arrival I telegraphed to Sir John Nixon, who had left by ship for Basra (the cutting of the line of communications at Sheikh Saad appears to have been the work only of some raiders, who disappeared after a few shots from a gunboat), saying that I had decided to make a stand at Kut and entrench, in order to hold up the Turkish counter-offensive at all costs, and also to enable him to concentrate the reinforcements arriving at Basra on the line Amarah-Ali Gharbi. I added that I had already issued orders for putting my plan of defence into action ; I had a month's full rations for British troops, two months' for the Indian troops, and ample ammunition.

Thus was the retreat successfully accomplished. As I watched the exhausted troops dragging themselves by me—for it could hardly be called marching—past the line of block-houses into Kut, I thought of what Jomini has said of retreats : " Courage and firmness in adversity is more honourable than enthusiasm in success ; for courage only is required to attack and carry a position, whereas heroism is necessary to carry out a difficult retreat before an enterprising and exultant enemy, and by opposing to him a front of bronze without letting oneself be discouraged. It is the duty of a state to reward a good retreat equally with the most brilliant victory." " Honourable retreats," says Lord Bacon, " are no ways inferior to brave charges, as having less fortune, more of discipline, and as much of valour." " An honourable retreat," says Napier, in his " Peninsular War," speaking of Moore's retreat, " is that one in which the retiring general loses no trophies in the fight, sustains every charge without being broken, and finally after a severe action re-embarks his army in the face of a superior enemy without being seriously molested."

To sum up the retreat from Ctesiphon to Kut: Mine was a retreat in the face of an overwhelming force of Turks, undertaken after a desperate battle at Ctesiphon, in which the losses had been over 33 per cent. of the total combatants engaged. The whole brunt of the loss was borne by the infantry. Therefore the casualities of 4,500 meant over half my fighting force; yet in no way was the discipline and good order of the Sixth Division affected. It was a retreat of ninety miles, with the advanced guard of the Turkish 6th Army on my heels. On 1st December I was forced to halt and to fight against my will, in order to save some ships and barges on the river. Yet not only was the attack repulsed, but it was driven headlong back by means of an offensive counter-stroke on the enemy's flank, which all experienced soldiers will recognise as sufficient testimony to the discipline and manœuvring powers of the troops in retreat. After repulsing the enemy I broke off the action—the hardest test of all in rearguard fighting—and continued the retirement in echelons of brigades, under as good conditions as in peace training. Not a single wounded man was left behind, though 500 were killed and wounded in that action; not a single gun was lost, and 1,500 Turkish prisoners marched with my column throughout. Never, I consider, has a British force done longer or more exhausting marches than those of 1st and 2nd December.* Never in any war in modern military history have British troops been more highly tried than in the Ctesiphon operations. Yet never was there a murmur—never the slightest sign of demoralisation or insubordination. I hope that history will call this also an honourable retreat.

The reply of Sir John Nixon to my telegram announcing my decision to stand at Kut was as follows:—

"December 3rd, 1915.

"The Army Commander is glad to hear of your decision, and is convinced that your troops will continue to show the same spirit in the defence as they have shown throughout your operations. Reinforcements will be pushed up to you with every possible speed."

* Thirty-six and forty miles.

APPENDIX PART III

OPERATION ORDERS FOR ADVANCE TO ZEUR.

6th DIVISION ORDERS.
No. 55.

1. Information *re* the enemy has been imparted to G.O.C. brigades and heads of departments.

2. The Division and troops attached will continue its offensive movement to-morrow, moving on **Zeur**, marching at 9.30 a.m.

3. The Division will advance in 3 parallel columns as follows :—

On Left Bank. **B Column** (directing) by the Baghdad road, on the left.
A Column on the right of B. (north).
On Right Bank. **C Column** moving independently.
Starting Points. Column B. Yellow Flag at the junction of the Baghdad and El Kutunie roads.
Column A. Red Flag, due north of S.P. of Column B.

4. **The Divisional Troops** will follow the tail of B Column, the Divisional Artillery (less heavy batteries) and 17 Company Sappers and Miners will follow the leading battalion of Column B.

The Field Ambulance will follow the tail of the Divisional Troops.

5. **A General Advanced Guard**(*a*) for columns B and A will be furnished by Column B ; consisting of 2 battalions, 1 Section R.F.A. and the Divisional Cavalry Squadron.

6. **A Right Flank Guard** to be thrown out by G.O.C., A Column.

7. **Cavalry Brigade** has received instructions to move from **El Kutunie**, moving round the north side of the Marsh in Squares H2 and 3, and thence moving down on to the northern extremity of the Zeur entrenchments in co-operation with Column A, will menace the line of retreat of the enemy from Zeur on to Ctesiphon.

8. Column C, commanded by Brigadier-General Hoghton, will move by the **right** bank of the river, from El Kutunie, marching at 7.30 a.m., with general instructions to sweep the right bank of the hostile Arabs, and, taking the entrenchments shown on map in the north end of the river loop opposite the Zeur position, if found to be held, will enfilade the enemy holding the Zeur entrenchments with rifle and machine-gun fire.

9. The Naval Flotilla and 4.7 guns(*b*) in Horse Boats will co-operate with Column C. accompanying that column to assist its progress with artillery fire.(*c*)

10. **Divisional Ammunition Column**(*d*) will follow Column B at tail of Field Ambulance. G.O.C. Column B is responsible for the security of Divisional Ammunition Column.

11. **Divisional Headquarters** will march at head of Column B.

12. **The Divisional Train and Supply Column**(*e*) will follow at the tail of the Divisional Ammunition Column ; escort ½ 24th Punjabis.

(*a*) G.S.O. I. had to inform G.O.C. B Column that I desired 3,500 yards distance—effective field artillery range—between the tail of this advanced guard and the head of Column B.
(*b*) 4.7 Naval Guns mounted in the bows of Horse Boats.
(*c*) G.S.O., I. was told to request S.N.O. to send a gunboat ahead as an advanced guard to Column C.
(*d*) Land Section of this column, the other section in ships.
(*e*) Land section of it.

13. It will be accepted as a principle by G.O.C. Columns, when the Division is advancing in two or more parallel columns, that, should one of the columns meet with solid resistance, the neighbouring column will at once assist its progress by the turning manœuvre.

14. The S.N.O. to arrange that one of his gunboats will follow the tail of the ship convoy, which will advance up river from Kutunie when the A.Q.M.G. of the division indicates that move.

4.30 p.m.

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS TO G.O.C. CAVALRY BRIGADE.

You will move at 8 a.m. to-morrow to turn the northern end of the Zeur entrenchments, reporting to me whether these entrenchments are held or abandoned.

Should they be held you will menace the enemy's line of retreat on Ctesiphon and endeavour to capture his guns.

I do not anticipate that Zeur will be held, as the Air Service reported last night (17th–18th November) that the Turkish Light Detachment, estimated at 400 Cavalry and 1,200 Camel Corps, was seen to fall back some 2 miles along the river, where a steamer with barges was observed.

Should Zeur not be held, carry out the service of exploration to the west and south-west, and generally ensure the security of the Division to the westward till the late afternoon.

If the enemy are within reach of your pursuit, capture guns and steamer if possible.

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS TO G.O.C. COLUMN C.

You will advance at 7.30 a.m. to-morrow, 19th November, by the right bank of the Tigris with your column, plus 1 section 17th Company Sappers and Miners, in order to sweep the right bank of hostile Arabs from the numerous villages on the river bank, should they show signs of resistance.

Reference Map 21, you will see an entrenchment marked in right hand top corner of Square 96, and in the neighbourhood of the entrenchment to the westward, "Arab Camp Fort and houses." (This is all part of what is called Jumeisa Village on map.) If you are fired at seriously from this locality you will attack and burn the village, but, in view of your numbers, I do not think that you will meet with any resistance. I am sending the Naval Flotilla and the 4.7 guns in horse-boats (one 4-inch is mounted the forecastle of the *Firefly* and a 6-pounder on its upper fighting deck, which has a fair command over the banks. The *Shushan* and *Mahsoudieh* also have pom-poms (which should be very useful) to accompany your column—keeping slightly ahead so as to assist your progress with artillery fire if necessary. For this reason it will be desirable for you to keep near the river bank if possible (by the usual village path), as the track inland is at places some 3 miles distant from the river. By keeping near the bank you would be also in sight of Columns B and A advancing on Zeur.

If Zeur is held, I desire your co-operation by the right bank, by your enfilade rifle and machine-gun fire, combined with Naval Flotilla guns, which will soon make the Zeur entrenchments untenable. There is an entrenchment shown at Baghdadie, on the right bank south of Zeur. I do not think it will be held in face of our numbers, but if it is you must rush it, after bombardment by Naval Flotilla.

The S.N.O., on board the *Firefly* has a copy of these instructions. Arrange your plan together.

I am sending the Assistant Political Officer with you. He will be able to advise you as to the Arabs, etc. He sent a letter to Ajil yesterday at Jumeisa to give him more chance of coming in, as I want a quiet river. So do not begin firing on them or burning their villages, unless they molest you.

The reason I am not sending guns with you is that I do not think they would be able to get along by the river bank. I hope that the news of your advancing on right bank will reach Nureddin with Arab exaggeration and induce him to regard his right bank dispositions of his troops more seriously.

OPERATION ORDERS FOR THE BATTLE OF CTESIPHON.

6th DIVISION ORDER No. 60.

Reference Map No. 22. 21st November, 1915.

Information.

1. According to intelligence and Air Service reports, the enemy, estimated at 10,000 to 11,000* troops and 30 guns, is in position at Ctesiphon, astride the river, and is distributed as follows :—

7,500 men on Left Bank of the Tigris in the lines of Ctesiphon as follows : 1,500 to 2,500 men in the first line of entrenchments and a reserve of 4,000 to 5,000 men at Qusabah destined to occupy the second line of entrenchments† some two miles north of the first line. These lines extend from the river bank to a distance of 6 miles inland respectively, *vide* Map 22, the 2nd line being echelonned back at some 3,400 yards' average distance from the 1st line, though longer in places. Aerial reconnaissance reports that this reserve of 4,000 men and a battery is advancing from Qusabah to occupy the 1st line entrenchments at V.P. On the right bank of the Tigris an estimated garrison of 3,500 men is installed in redoubts and entrenchments on that bank. The troops of the right bank are connected by boat-bridge at Qusabah with those on the left bank.

Intention.

2. The G.O.C. will attack the enemy's position on the Left Bank of the Tigris (this force has an impassable river in its rear), with the object of destroying it by throwing it into either the Tigris or the Diala.

In order to do this he will contain and hold the enemy in front with his Minimum Force, whilst with his Maximum Force he will execute a turning manœuvre against the enemy's extreme left flank and rear. This turning move will be preliminary to a decisive attack by the Principal Mass against that flank of the enemy which has already been turned.

In other words that decisive effort is directed against one of the enemy's flanks, viz., his Left, or Eastern, flank, the objectives, on which the different attacks by separated forces (at effective field artillery range from each other) will converge, being selected before deployment.

Preparatory attack : MINIMUM FORCE. Brig.-Gen. HOGHTON Comdg.

3. Column " C." 17th Infy. Brig. (less ½ battn.).
Divisional troops.
10th Brig., R.F.A. (less 2 Batteries).
86th Battery, R.G.A.
48th Pioneers.
No. 17 Co. Sappers and Miners.
1 Pack Wireless Set.
Divisional Cavalry Squadron.
1 Brit. and 2 Ind. Sections Field Ambulance.

Column " C " will move forward at 2 p.m. to-day along the Baghdad road and progress as far as and inclusive of Square J. 4. General Hoghton will move on a front of some 1,500 yards, or a mile, and will endeavour in every way to make a display of force ; his right should rest on telegraph line.

Time of attack. At daylight, 22nd November, he will move forward and commence his preparatory attack frontally against that part of the enemy's 1st line which extends from middle of Sq. I.4 to 1,000 yards south. Aided by spade and entrenching tool and the Divisional Artillery, he will work his way forward to within long rifle-range of the enemy if possible. Not only is his *rôle* to pin the enemy down in his position, but by making a great display and pretence of force to induce the enemy to bring reserves to this menaced part of his position. He will utilise all dry canals, water-cuts and accidental terrain for establishing himself solidly close to the enemy.

General Hoghton will not make his attack a decisive one until he sees the Principal Mass, or General Reserve, under General Delamain moving

* I purposely put the enemy in my published orders at the lowest estimate in order not to dishearten my troops.

† The second-line entrenchments were only partially completed.

forward. Having got into the enemy's position, General Hoghton should sweep to the southward in order to assist the naval flotilla in its passage through the new cut in the river, Square J. 6.

Naval Flotilla.

4 4.7-in. guns on horse-boats.
2 5-in. guns 86th H. By.
N.B.—2 5-in. guns on barge with Naval Flotilla.

4. The Naval Flotilla will co-operate on the river in the attack on the enemy's position as follows :—

Naval Flotilla gunboats, the 4.7-in. Naval guns and two 5-in. guns on barges, will co-operate from the river, taking up position south-east of Bustan in Sq. K. 4. The zone of operations of the 4.7-in. Naval guns and the Naval Flotilla gunboats and the objective zone to be swept by their fire will be that portion of the hostile position south-east of where the Baghdad road runs through Sq. J. 5. They should endeavour to locate and engage all hostile guns which open fire within this area, but should quit the guns to engage any moving infantry, whether advancing or retiring, and should carefully watch for any infantry moving up the Right bank towards our boat-bridge. As regards pursuit a free hand is left to the S.N.O.

TURNING ATTACK. Column B.

Commanding, Brig.-Gen. Hamilton.
18th Infantry Brigade.
63rd Battery, R.F.A.
1 Brit. and 3 Ind. Secns. Field Ambulance.
1 Pack Wireless Set.

ROLE OF THE TURNING ATTACK.

Cavalry Column.

Comdg. Maj.-Gen. Sir C. Melliss.

Troops—
Cavalry Bde. (Brig.-Gen. Roberts).
Maxim Battery.
76th Punjabis.
Motor Machine Gun Secn.
1 Pack Wireless Set.
Cavalry Bde. Ammtn. Col.
Cavalry Bde. Field Amb.

After the battle has been well commenced, the turning attack, with which the Cavalry Column will work, on its exterior flank (some 2 miles), will attack the left flank and rear of the enemy's second line of entrenchments, thus engaging the Turkish general reserve and drive it from the field.

This turning attack must be pushed with boldness, vigour, and resolution ; nothing must stop it.

The Objective is through Qusabah village "Camp" on river bank. This is behind the enemy's second-line entrenchments.

Although the Cavalry Column and 18th Mixed Brigade are independent commands, the two commanders will work in intimate co-operation and understanding, and mutual support and unity of intention. The Cavalry column should be able to render second line of enemy's trenches untenable by enfilade and reverse H.A. Fire ; and the effect should also be to cause the retreat of the garrison of the first line of entrenchments, when they hear our guns in their rear.

The G.O.C. turning attack column, General Hamilton, should commence his attack about 7.30 a.m., i.e., well after Column "C" should have commenced the frontal attack.

PRINCIPAL MASS OR GENERAL RESERVE.

Principal Mass or General Reserve.

6. Commanding Troops : Maj.-Gen. Delamain.
16th Infantry Brigade.
82nd Battery, R.F.A.
1/5 Hants Howitzers.
Half No. 22 Co. Sappers and Miners.
Half 30th Brigade—Comdg. : Col. Climo.
2/7 Gurkhas.
Half 24th Punjabis.
2nd Brit. and 3 Ind. Secns. Field Amb.

ROLE OF THE PRINCIPAL MASS OR GENERAL RESERVE.

The Principal Mass will be launched forward to the attack of the Vital Point (marked " V.P." on the map), by order of the G.O.C. Division, under whose direction the General Reserve remains until launched to the attack. The advance of the General Reserve or Principal Mass is the signal for the whole force to engage and move forward against the enemy. Every effort will be made by the Artillery fire of the Divisional Artillery and General Reserve or Principal Mass to cover " V.P." with projectiles in order that a clear avenue of approach may be swept for the General Reserve or Principal Mass, which is the hammer blow to give us victory.

Action if counter-attacked, etc.

7. If any other portion of the force is counter-attacked, all it has to do is to hold on. The violence of the attack of the General Reserve or Principal Mass will be increased and success at the " Vital Point " must give victory everywhere.

Should any body of the troops lose its way in the dark it will be able at daylight to co-operate with the general great turning attack of the three attacks against the enemy's flank and rear.

Let all Commanding Officers impress on officers and men what our King and Country expect of us at this moment—for the news of the impending battle has reached London and Simla—and that the half-trained Turk and undisciplined Arab battalions have never yet stood for the bayonet when resolutely charged. The attack of all must be characterised with vigour and resolution. As regards pursuit by the Cavalry Column special instructions have been issued.

Assembly.

8. The points of assembly for the Principal Mass, Turning attack, and Cavalry Column, have been communicated confidentially to G.O.C.'s of these columns, who are making their own arrangements to fix these points, which will be reached under cover of darkness to-night. All will march as one body under arrangements of General Delamain—first to the position to be taken up by the Principal Mass, after which the remainder will proceed along the track or dry canal. The turning attack column will reach its point, three miles beyond the position of the Principal Mass, and the Flying Column then proceed on to where General Melliss will take up his position. All concealment possible will be taken, but the enemy's patrols will surely get news of this move. This cannot be helped.

Air Service.

9. The Flight Commander will receive special instructions *re* the *rôle* of the Air Service in battle. Its principal duty will be to give information as to the direction of retreat of the bulk of the enemy's forces in the field and to ensure the service of observation and information *re* any reinforcements coming from Baghdad to assist the enemy, and any movement of the enemy on the Right bank.

Divisional Ammunition Column.

10. Divisional Ammunition Column will be distributed according to the orders of the B.G.R.A. as follows :—

Cavalry Brigade. Ammunition Column with Cavalry Column.
Divisional Ammunition Column (Land Section).
With Column " B." (63rd Battery, R.F.A.) 9 wagons.
With Column " A." (82nd Battery)5 wagons, 10 A.T. carts.
(1/5 Hants Howitzers Battery) 12 A.T. carts.
With Column " C." (76th Battery, R.F.A.) 4 wagons, 10 A.T. carts.
River Section (at Lajj).

Medical.

11. Position of Advanced Dressing Stations will be selected by Column Commanders. The line of evacuation of wounded will be to the tent division of field ambulance.

Divisional Headquarters.

12. Will close at Lajj at 2 p.m. and open with the Divisional Troops

with Column "C" at that hour. During the action, Divisional Headquarters will be near the Divisional Artillery in rear of right flank Column "C."

Rations.

PART II.

13. In addition to emergency rations one full day's rations will be carried on the man, also as much water as possible. One day's food is to be loaded up in unit charge and left at Lajj with the Divisional Train, which will be under the smallest possible baggage guard detailed from the weakly men.

Escort to Divisional Train, etc.

14. Escort to Divisional Train and ships at Lajj will be half battn. 103d. L.I.

B. G. PEEL, Capt.,
for Col., General Staff.

OPERATION ORDERS FOR THE RETIREMENT TO KUT.

6th DIVISION ORDER No. 67.

Information. Nov. 25th, 1915.

1. The enemy had retreated to a position he has fortified on the Diala River, and to another position E., i.e., on this side of the Diala. This he is digging in. The bulk of the hostile force is 9 miles from us.

Intention.

2. Therefore the G.O.C., considering that he has sufficiently waited in the worst tactical and strategical position that can be imagined, has decided that political reasons are not sufficiently strong to risk disaster for them. Consequently he has decided to march to Lajj at 8.30 a.m. to-morrow—where in tactical security he can await reinforcements, ammunition and food convoy.

3. The Division will march to Lajj to-morrow in 1 column. **Starting point** on road ½ mile E. of camp will be indicated by G.S.O. III.

Order of march :—

(*a*) Column B* (head to pass starting point at 8.30 a.m.).
(*b*) Divisional Troops, i.e., 17th Co. S. & M., Pack Wireless.
(*c*) Interval of 1,000 yards.
(*d*) Column "A" (less 1 Mixed Bde.).

4. **Rear Guard.** 1 Mixed Brigade Column "A," Cavalry Brigade.
Left Flank Guard. 1 ditto, Company Col. "B," to be in position on left flank at 8.30 a.m.

5. **Divisional Train,** including all tent divisions Field Ambulance, followed by 86th Heavy Battery.

will rendezvous at starting point at 6.45 a.m. and move off in order of march of columns at 7 a.m., preceding main body by three miles.

Escort. ½ Bn. Col. "B."
48th Pioneers.
1 Troop Div. Cavalry.

Camp Colour Parties will march at head of the Divisional Train.

Div. H.Q.

6. Div. Hd. Qrs. will march at head of Col. "A" with remainder of Div. Cav. Sqdn.

Medical.

7. Two bearer sub-divns. Field Amb. are allotted to Col. "A" and one to Col. "B." To complete these units to proper strength 8 stretcher-bearers per Inf. unit will report to S.M.O. at Field Ambulance bivouac at 7 a.m.

Halt and Bivouac, 26th November.

The A.Q.M.G. preceding the force to Lajj will make all arrangements regarding bivouac—a sketch of which is attached.

B. G. PEEL, Capt.,
for Colonel, General Staff.

6th DIVISION ORDER No. 70.

Organisation. 29th November, 1915.

1. The force will for battle purposes be grouped again into Mixed

* Less 48th Pioneers and 3 double companies Infantry.

Brigades and Cavalry Brigade, as in 6th Division Order of Nov. 4th, but with modifications.

16th Mixed Brigade	16th Infy. Bde. 82nd Battery, R.F.A. ½ No. 22 Co. S. & M. 3 Bearer Sub-divns. No. 2 F.A.
17th Mixed Brigade.	17th Infantry Bde. ½ No. 17 Co. S. & M. 2 Bearer Sub-divns. No. 2 F.A. Maxim Battery.
18th Mixed Brigade.	18th Infantry Bde. 63rd Battery, R.F.A. ½ No. 22 Co. S. & M. 2 Bearer Sub-divns. No. 106 F.A.
30th Mixed Brigade or the General Reserve.	30th Brigade Inf. (incl. R.W. Kents and 48th Pioneers). 10th Brigade R.F.A. (less 2 Bys.). 2 Bearer Sub-divns. No. 106 F.A. 1/5 Hants Howr. By. (attd. 10th Brigade R.F.A.).

Cavalry Brigade (now increased by 14th Hussars, Cav. Bde., F. Amb.).

2. The organisation will come into force at once, and after leaving Azizieh Mixed Brigades will bivouac together.

Divisional Troops.

3. Divisional Troops :—

1 Sq. 23rd Cavalry.
104th H.B. (less 1 Secn.).
86th Battery, R.G.A. (when available).
Divl. Amtn. Col. (Land and Water Secn. Barge 8).
4.7 guns.
1 Pack Wireless Set (horsed).
2 Pack and 1 Wagon Wireless Sets (when available).
Bridge Train.
Searchlight Section.
Army Signal Co.
Advance Ordnance Depot.
Aeroplanes.
1 Bearer Sub-Divn. No. 1 F.A.
Tent Sub-Divns. Nos. 1, 2 and 106 F.A.

B. G. PEEL, Capt.,
for Colonel, General Staff.

PRELIMINARY INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE DEFENCE OF KUT-AL-AMARA.

(FROM MY ORDER NOTE-BOOK, DECEMBER 2nd, 1915.)

Northern Sector Block-house line with redoubts and second line also. ...	General Delamain, 16th Brigade.
Eastern Sector, including Fort	General Hoghton, 17th Brigade.
Southern Sector	General Hamilton, 18th Brigade.
General Reserve	30th Brigade (General Melliss) in Kut town.

I asked for a list of all Engineering Stores from C.R.E. as soon as possible. Also I desired to know the amount of Supplies in hand.—Colonel Annesley.
I asked for amount of Ammunition, gun and rifle.—Colonel Chitty, A.Q.M.G.

Orders to C.R.E. The old Turkish bridge of boats to be brought to Kut from down river below the fort and thrown across at Kut itself, to enable me to throw troops on right bank if I want to do so. A **Strong Bridge-head** must be established on right bank to protect the bridge, consisting of 3 redoubts, 800 yards apart and about half a mile from the river bank.

The Brigadier-General Commanding R.A. to report to me at once the best position for the installation of the heavy guns and the bulk of artillery with

the primary object of a good fire sweep of likely avenues of approach by enemy.

The **Cavalry Brigade** to raid for cattle in country around in the next two days.

All grain and supplies with the merchants in Kut to be commandeered. All Arab inhabitants to be turned out of the town and 20 principal Arabs to be kept as hostages.

Strong Police detachment for the town to be furnished by 30th Brigade.

A Fire Brigade company to be organised for the town.

Ammunition and supplies must be placed in separate magazines, several in different places.

All native transport drivers and followers to be made available for grinding grain by native hand-mills.

The **Cavalry Brigade** to be encamped on the eastern outskirts of the town.

Such are the pencilled " instructions on principle " I handed to Colonel Evans to get out in Operation Orders and to work on as soon as we arrived at Kut. There were no entrenchments, as far as I knew, but there was a square walled enclosure called a " Fort," useful against Arabs, and a line of block-houses established by General Gorringe.

It will be seen that I had no time to establish a bridge at Kut, with strong bridge-head—for no works of defence whatever existed there, and my men were too exhausted by the march to do anything but sleep and eat for two days. Had I been able to use the right bank with a defensible bridge-head, I should have conducted an active defence—the defensive-offensive—which would have made all the difference in the world.

PART IV—THE SIEGE OF KUT

CHAPTER XII

THE DEFENCE OF KUT: FIRST PHASE.

It will have been seen that the idea in my mind during my retreat on Kut was to hold on to that place and not to retire beyond it. The reasons which actuated me I recapitulate as follows:—

(*a*) Strategical: By holding Kut, the junction of the Tigris and Hai Rivers (the latter connecting the Tigris and the Euphrates at the important point of Nasiriyeh, which is only some six marches from Basra), I blocked the advance of the 6th Turkish Army, as it was as dependent on water transport as the British were. So long as his steamers and lighters could not pass under my guns, so long should I save the whole of Mesopotamia from being overrun, for there were no troops to prevent Marshal Von der Goltz—who had now arrived with a large staff of German officers and taken command of the 6th Turkish Army—from assuming the offensive and driving the British from Mesopotamia.

(*b*) Secondly, besides holding up the tide of the Turkish counter-offensive at Kut, I should give time to Sir John Nixon to assemble and unite in security the scattered packets of reinforcements, which had now begun to arrive at Basra, into a solid mass at Amarah and northwards. I also gave him liberty of action and manœuvre. Thus my division would in a sense act as a covering force for the concentration of the new troops—with the exception that my force would have to fight, and on principle a covering force, watching as much ground as is consistent with prudence, should never fight, but should fall back on the force it is covering, concentrating its extended detachments to the rear, as it retires. It should never get engaged and pinned down. A fatal example of a covering force standing its ground to fight was afforded by Mack at Ulm in 1805, but my case was quite a different one from that of Mack. After a severe battle I had been forced to retreat from sheer inability to keep the open field through lack of numbers. I should have to make Kut into an entrenched camp.

Now, all history is at hand to show that a force should not

shut itself up in an entrenched camp unless the commander can reckon with certainty on approaching reinforcements, or unless it is close to the base and can easily be supported, as was the case with Wellington at Torres Vedras, where he was based on the port of Lisbon hard by, and had the support of the Fleet. In such a case the force is rested and not weakened by further retreat, while the enemy's operations may even be brought to a standstill for a time. Osman Pacha, entrenched at Plevna, was able to paralyse the Russian advance. By holding the neck of the bottle at Kut, the Turks could not use the Hai for transport to Nasiriyeh, as they could well have done had they got possession of Kut. By leaving a minimum force to hold Kut, Von der Goltz might have directed the principal mass of his army on Nasiriyeh, held by General Brooking with a small mixed detachment of two or three Indian infantry battalions, which could have made no serious resistance to his large forces. By moving on Basra from Nasiriyeh he would have turned the British position on the Tigris, and thus compelled the evacuation of Mesopotamia. In addition, with such a strategic turning manœuvre he could always have retreated on Baghdad by the line of the Euphrates.

I determined to defend Kut as one defends a river line—by the manœuvre on a central position. I intended to use my entrenched camp as a pivot of manœuvre, when, by improvising a bridge and a fortified bridge-head, I should be able to throw the principal mass of my force on to either bank of the Tigris in an offensive against any isolated fraction of the enemy. In other words, I should manœuvre in battle just as if I were fighting a defensive-offensive battle.

Had my troops been able to work and get the bridge across the Tigris opposite the town of Kut, I should have been able to make an *active* defence.

Such dispositions would have made all the difference in the world. It would be possible for me to inflict a severe check, or even defeat, on the enemy, the *moral* of my troops would not be impaired, and if necessary I could abandon Kut at need and fall back by the right bank on the approach of the relieving force, who would stretch out a helping arm to me.

It was probable that Von der Goltz the strategist would leave a minimum force of approximately my own size to mask me, whilst with his Principal Mass he would pass round Kut to the northward and establish himself in the already existing defensive position of Essinn, astride the Tigris and some six miles down river, and there give battle to the force coming to my relief. I hoped that the Turks would try to take Kut by a *coup de main*, but it was more probable that Von der Goltz would not commit the error of attacking a fortified place, and he might think that Kut was a strong entrenched camp and be ignorant of its weakness, owing to the invisibility of

modern trenches. As a matter of fact, not a single trench existed when I reached Kut. The sole defences consisted of a line of three or four block-houses suitable for savage warfare on the left bank, about 2,000 yards north of the town of Kut, and a mud-walled enclosure called a " fort " to the north-east of the river bank about 2,800 yards distant from the town, also only suitable for savage warfare. The old Turkish bridge of boats was some seven hundred yards further down stream. The famous block-houses had very quickly to be demolished, as they formed perfect ranging points for the enemy's guns.

I knew well the fate which in history is generally reserved for the force which deliberately shuts itself up in an entrenched camp or fortified place, as did Bazaine at Metz, Mack at Ulm, or Osman at Plevna. If the relieving army is unable to reach the besieged force, military history offers hardly any examples of the self-deliverance of an army once invested. It was open to me to retire to the Essinn position, some six miles below Kut, the defences of which still existed, but were facing the reverse way to which I should want them, and embraced a front of six miles on the left bank (i.e., the front of two Army Corps) and three miles (the front of an Army Corps) on the right bank. This would have been an impossible extent of front for my exhausted 7,000 infantry—or 10,000 combatants of all ranks and units—including the garrison of one and a half battalions I found at Kut on my arrival. In any case, it was practically impossible for me to retire from Kut ; so exhausted were my troops that they lay down and could do nothing but sleep and eat for two days ! Under these conditions it was impossible for me to evacuate the large stores of provisions and ammunition to Essinn ; and there was no other food for me to get this side of Amarah. Had I taken up my position at Essinn, I should have been enveloped and overwhelmed in a decisive battle in three or four days' time. Or the enemy might march straight to Sheikh Saad from Kut, and thus turn my position at Essinn. Finally, to finish off any other arguments on this subject : we could not have remained at Essinn on account of the food question—we should have been starved in a week.

On 4th December, the morning after I reached Kut, I sent the following telegram to the M.G.G.S. at Basra, where Sir John Nixon then was :

" I am making Kut into as strong an entrenched camp as possible in the given time, the enemy's advanced guard being some ten miles distant and the main body five miles beyond that. As it is reported that Von der Goltz is at Baghdad now, in command of the Turkish Army of six divisions, I shall expect him to turn this place, leaving a force of observation at Kut to contain me. The relieving force will possibly have to fight a second battle of Essinn. I have shut myself up in Kut reckoning with certainty on being relieved by large forces now

arriving at Basra. The state of extreme weariness and exhaustion of my men demands instant rest. Our being at Kut will also delay Von der Goltz's relieving force on the Amarah—Ali-al-Gharbi line. It is only violation of Economy of Force if you send up reinforcements in packets; Von der Goltz would take instant advantage of this. Eight hundred sick and wounded go down to-day."

Never have I seen anything like the exhaustion of the troops after we reached Kut. The great bulk of the Indian troops could not move at all, though I got the British to work on 4th December,* just as the Turkish advanced guard came into sight! Thus I was prevented from carrying out my intention of throwing a bridge across the Tigris, and so making my defence an offensive one. I remarked at the time to Evans, my Chief Staff Officer, "This will have a serious bearing on the result of the operation." It compelled my defence to be an absolutely passive one, and prevented all chance of breaking out of Kut, or of co-operating with the relief force on the right bank.

The Major-General, General Staff, had wired to G.O.C. Kut (Brigadier-General Rimington, R.E.) on 2nd December:

"Please tell Townshend that Army Commander must leave situation to him as to how far he falls back. But Army Commander's intention is to concentrate reinforcements as far forward as possible."

I was not given this telegram till 4th December at night! This was owing to an oversight or carelessness on the part of a Staff Officer. I only became aware of its existence by Captain Morland referring to it in conversation.

The Army Commander notified his approval of my action in standing fast at Kut-al-Amara in the following telegram from Major-General, General Staff, of 3rd December, 1915:—

"The Army Commander is glad to hear of your decision, and is convinced that your troops will continue to show the same spirit in the defence as they have shown throughout your operations. Reinforcements will be pushed up to you with every possible speed."

On this date also I issued a *communiqué* to the troops:—

"I intend to defend Kut-al-Amara and not to retire any further. Reinforcements are being sent at once from Basra to relieve us.

"The honour of our mother country and the Empire demands that we all work heart and soul in the defence of this place. We must dig in deep and dig in quickly, and then the enemy's shells will do little damage. We have ample food and ammunition, but commanding officers must husband the ammunition and not throw it away uselessly.

"The way you have managed to retire some eighty or ninety miles under the very noses of the Turks is nothing short of

* It was a real calamity for me, this exhaustion of the troops.

splendid, and speaks eloquently for the courage and discipline of this force."

I also sent a telegram in answer to a demand from the M.G.G.S. to say that I did not consider it advisable that I should send a mixed detachment down river to Sheikh Saad, as I could not feed it. I was about to be invested, the enemy being only ten miles distant. My troops were too wearied to move. The troops coming up river should supply such posts.

On 4th December my Field State showed 10,398 combatants, 1,505 of whom were the Cavalry Brigade, which I sent away on the morning of 6th December. I started the siege, therefore, with 8,893 combatants under my command. Of these 7,411 were infantry, a total which included the one and a half Indian battalions I had found at Kut on my arrival and the half battalion of West Kents picked up at Azizieh during the retirement. The 30th Brigade of the 12th Division was also still attached to my Division. The British battalions in particular were very weak, while the Divisional troops were fairly numerous. I had 2,700 yards (one and a quarter miles) of front, on the north-west of the town, to defend. The generally accepted principle demands three to five men per running yard of defence, so that it will be seen that I had not enough men for the defence of my land front alone. This does not take into consideration the town of Kut with its Arab population, nor the Wool Press on the right bank of the river, for the defence of which I had to detach one battalion. Of ammunition I had roughly 800 rounds per rifle, and there was a fair quantity for the guns in the magazine. (See Appendix to Part IV for statements of strength and ammunition.)

On the first day of my arrival I organised the defence as follows :—

Northern Sector.	Major-General W. S. Delamain.	16th Brigade.
North-East Sector.	Brigadier-General F. A. Hoghton.	17th Brigade.
Southern Sector. (Including the town of Kut and garrison of the liquorice factory and wool press on the right bank opposite the town.)	Brigadier-General W. H. Hamilton.	18th Brigade.
General Reserve.	Major-General Sir Charles Melliss.	30th Brigade.
Divisional Artillery.	Concentrated principally at brick kilns.	

The defence consisted of three lines :—

1. Main Line of Defence. Along the line of the fort and existing blockhouses.

2. Middle Line of Defence.
3. 2nd Line of Defence.

The Divisional Engineer Commander was ordered to give me a list of all engineering stores in Kut as soon as possible, including what remained of bridging material after the retreat.

A list of all supplies had to be furnished to me, including those available in the town, which would be commandeered if necessary; also a list of the ammunition. I ordered ammunition and supplies to be stored in different magazines and distributed in various places.

The old bridge of boats was to be brought down and thrown across to the south of Kut Town; and a strong bridge-head of three redoubts installed on the right bank to protect the bridge and cover my debouch on to the right bank if necessary.

I gave orders for the Arabs in the town who were not householders to be turned out, with the exception of those the Military Governor of Kut might recommend to me. Twenty of the principal Arab inhabitants were handed over to me as hostages for the good behaviour of the rest. I arranged for a strong force of Military Police to be organised in the town; and also a Fire Brigade. All transport carts not in actual use were to be parked in a place selected by the Assistant Quartermaster-General, and all drivers and followers not actually employed were put on to grinding grain in hand-mills.

Heads of Departments had to send in reports as to their wants and the means at hand for supplying them.

General Staff Officer, Divisional Engineer Commander, and Brigadier-General, Royal Artillery, were to study the weak parts of the lines of defence and endeavour to rectify them.

Provision of bomb-proof cover for houses had to be gone into by the Divisional Engineer Commander.

The civil population was to furnish labour for work in trenches, roads, etc.

Good buildings for hospitals had to be selected.

Telephones were to connect different sectors of the defence with Divisional Headquarters, and passages were to be made through the town as short cuts.

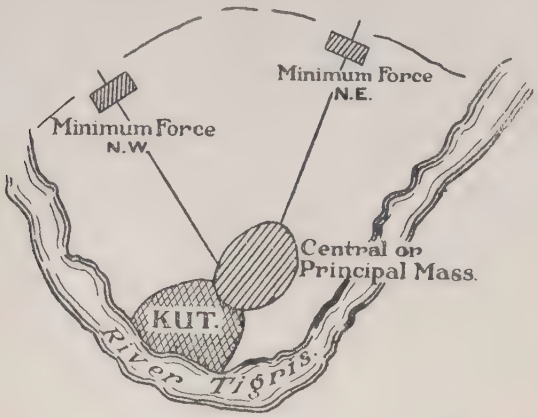
The town would be used as a Reduit or Keep, which could be defended step by step if necessary.

I gave the following principles, on which I should conduct the defence of Kut, to Colonel Evans, my G.S.O., I, who, in addition to his many other excellent qualities, is a most able engineer officer and a man of great energy. I told him to work on them in conjunction with the Divisional Engineer Commander and the Brigadier-General commanding the artillery.

Each main avenue of approach was to be held by a force sufficiently strong to guarantee its security; whilst I kept a Central Mass or General Reserve in my hand, ready to reinforce any of the sectors held by minimum forces, in case the enemy

delivered an assault on our entrenched camp. The guns of the defence were to be treated in the same way as the grouping of the infantry.

The factory on the right bank of the Tigris opposite Kut town was to be held by a battalion. And I was most particular to have three lines of defence.



All the entrenchments and redoubts had to be dug and thrown up under fire. Had Kut been fortified when I arrived, I should have had time, not only to establish a proper bridge, but also to make a fortified bridge-head on the right bank, and in this way to have conducted a far more offensive defence. As it was, I was forcedly pinned down to the passive defensive.

There were plenty of supplies:

For	British Troops ..	60 days.	
	Indian Troops ..	60 ,,	
	Fuel	21 ,,	and 33 days across the river in the liquorice factory
	Grain	30 ,,	
	Fodder	17 ,,	
	Biscuit	4 ,,	
	Flour	57 ,,	
	Atta	40 ,,	

In the town of Kut there was easily enough food for the population, some five or six thousand householders, to last about three months, but the Military Governor was authorised to buy up all grain.

In a communication to commanding officers I warned all officers to be guarded in their talk. "I can best serve Government," I continued, "by delaying the enemy at this juncture and thus give time for our reinforcements to concentrate as far forward as Ali-al-Gharbi. So I decided to stop at Kut,

and discontinue our retreat. The Army Commander has approved of this action. We have a hard time before us, but I have no doubt that we shall stand firm if all officers infuse a brave and manly spirit into their men, and I am confident as to the result. We must husband our ammunition carefully; we have 800 rounds per rifle, and roughly 600 rounds per gun, but with night attacks ammunition runs away like water. Therefore I ask Commanding Officers to be careful, and to impress the men with thrift in this direction."

In the early morning of 5th December, I received a telegram from the M.G.G.S., which had been despatched at midnight, 4-5th December, saying that alternatives to my plan had been carefully considered, and the Army Commander could only approve my proposal. Every effort was being made to relieve me as soon as possible, and it was hoped to do so within *two months*. He put forward the following points for my consideration :—In view of the possibility of my being invested at Kut, it would seem advisable to send back to Ali-al-Gharbi any mounted troops I could spare, transport, all shipping and gunboats, in order to facilitate the advance of the relief force and to save mouths to feed. The main concentration would now take place at Amarah, with a covering force at Ali-al-Gharbi. The 28th Brigade would be concentrated there as soon as possible.

This delay of two months did not suit me. On 6th December I wired that relief within two months would mean the loss of the division, for the whole Turkish army of six divisions would be all round me long before then. It would be best in such a case, I thought, to preserve the division by retiring to Ali-al-Gharbi, and uniting with the covering force there. My retirement should be arranged as soon as possible. I could save most of the ammunition and bring away the heavy guns.

I pointed out that the loss of the Division would be not only a dangerous blow to our prestige in Mesopotamia, but in India itself the effect would be most disastrous. I asked further if there were news of a Russian movement on Baghdad, as it would make all the difference in my situation.

If a Russian Force moved on Baghdad it would compel Von der Goltz to direct all his energies to its defence, and I should know that I was dealing at Kut with a hostile minimum force only, of my own strength or little more.

On 5th December, the Arab inhabitants of the town were searched for arms, and I resolved to send the Cavalry Brigade down to Ali-al-Gharbi to join the relief force, which was their natural *rôle*. I also ordered the boat-bridge to be constructed as rapidly as possible. By the night of 5th December, this bridge, composed of the remains of our bridge-train and the old Turkish bridge of boats brought up river from its former

site below the "Fort," had been thrown across the Tigris almost abreast of the brick kilns north-east of the town. I sent the Cavalry Brigade across at daylight on the 6th, accompanied by its mule and transport carts and "S" Battery, R.H.A., to march to Ali-al-Gharbi, *viâ* the right bank, General Roberts being in command. They had crossed by 11 a.m., and they disappeared in the direction of Sheikh Saad, followed by at least a thousand Arab horsemen, who were menacing their flank and rear.

On this date also I evacuated all shipping, gunboats and all the spare transport I could send down river, in order to facilitate the advance of the relief force and to save mouths to feed at Kut. Sir Percy Cox, recalled by Sir John Nixon, accompanied this flotilla.

I also wired to Sir John Nixon the "names of those officers who have been of priceless value to me in the arduous operations included by the battle of Ctesiphon and the retreat to Kut: Generals Melliss, Delamain, Hamilton. Following had rendered good service:

Generals Hoghton, Roberts and G. B. Smith, R.A.; Colonels Evans, Chitty, Grier, R.A., Stack; Major Hewitt, 14th Hussars. I wish to recommend for Victoria Cross Trench and Coventry, both Indian Cavalry. They took message through during night of 30th November-1st December to recall Melliss to my assistance. Sub-Lieut. Wood, R.N.R., and Lieut. Tudway, R.N., I recommend for D.S.O.'s. Fine work has been done by Major Winsloe, R.E.; Goldfrapp, Indian Infantry; Campbell, R.E.; Wilson, 7th Gurkhas; Morland, Oxford Light Infantry."

I added that more staff and regiment names would be sent in soon; but the above were down in my note-book especially, and I thought that rewards would be greatly appreciated and would cheer up all ranks.

The following telegram from the Army Commander to me was received on 6th December: "I am delighted to send you this just received from Chief, India. Begins: 'Please convey to General Townshend and all under his command my appreciation of the skill and gallantry displayed in their admirably conducted retirement on Kut-al-Amara in face of greatly superior numbers.' Ends. Following private message from home says: 'All England and Paris are talking of your wonderful success and brilliant achievements.' And so they ought. Army Commander."

At the request of the Flight Commander, I allowed the aeroplanes to go down river to Ali-al-Gharbi. He pointed out that once we were invested the hostile guns would prevent the machines from getting off the ground, and would also destroy them when at rest. I required of him constant aerial observation of the enemy's movements down river—as I expected him

to occupy his former position at Essinn—and also up river towards Azizieh, with regard to hostile reinforcements arriving from Baghdad. He said this could be done; but up to 10th January only four visits were paid us by the aeroplanes from Ali-al-Gharbi, notwithstanding my repeated requests for reconnaissance up river from Kut. No doubt there were serious reasons why my requests were not complied with.

At 6 p.m. on 6th December, I received the following reply from the Army Commander to my telegram of the same date:

"*First point.* 'Relieved by the period of two months' was an outside limit, calculating to arrival of last reinforcements and the time that would elapse before a general forward movement could be made. It is hoped to quicken this up.

"*Second point.* So far as we know, you are not yet invested, nor is the river line cut. Younghusband with 28th Brigade and Cavalry Brigade should be established at Ali-al-Gharbi and Sheikh Saad within the next week and enable supplies to be pushed on to you.

"*Third point.* Retirement from Kut would open Shatt-al-Hai to Turks, and have a very bad effect, and does not at present seem to be demanded as a military necessity. Of the actual dispositions for occupation of Kut you are the best judge. So far the Turks have apparently made no movement. Do you think it possible they have shot their bolt for the time? They have only five steamers as against our three times that number and more coming. You have some 10,000 against 12,000, and you have superiority of artillery.

"*Fourth point.* You speak of six divisions. Does this number include the 52nd, last reported to be in Baghdad, and 26th rumoured to be at or near Feluja, but not in any way confirmed? On the 5th inst. in your I.G.109 you spoke of only 3 divisions in front of you. You should send aeroplane reconnaissance to see what is going on at Badrah.

"*Fifth point.* Retirement from Kut should only be resorted to as last extremity. In any case the Essinn position seems indicated, not Ali-al-Gharbi, where you will be on top of Younghusband. Russians on 4th December were reported 3 marches from Hamadan and 23 marches from Baghdad, and Army Commander is wiring Chief of the General Staff to expedite their advance. It may be possible enemy wishes merely to contain you while concentrating on Nasiriyeh. Have you considered this? We are reinforcing Nasiriyeh at once to provide against this contingency.

"*Sixth point.* Remember that our large reinforcements, arriving daily, will have a good moral effect throughout Basra vilayet. Army Commander has asked for another Division and more heavy guns. As long as you remain at Kut enemy is

in ignorance of your plan, and you are fulfilling duties of a detachment by holding up superior numbers.

"*Seventh point.* Your 169 G. received. The concentration at Sheikh Saad and Ali-al-Gharbi will be carried out. Taking all these points into consideration, Army Commander does not approve of your proposal to fall back on Ali-al-Gharbi."

Thus it was finally settled that I was to stand at Kut. Under the circumstances—an absolute promise of relief—it was sound strategy, as otherwise the whole of Mesopotamia would have been lost. I had overwhelming numbers on me; and, had I delivered a battle in the open, I *must* have been defeated.

To talk of the enemy being 12,000 against my 10,000 was erroneous. They had an *advanced guard* of 12,000 on me on 1st December; and this advanced guard had a main body behind it!

"To be on top of Younghusband" at Ali-al-Gharbi was also an expression I did not understand. To be united to him would have been a most desirable event, for in that case I might have given the Turks a sound beating in open battle, and have changed the situation.

Under the date of 6th December, I find the following comment in my diary on the resolution to stand at Kut:—

"Amongst other diasdvantages, an entrenched camp can never guarantee even shelter from fire for a force occupying it, and is therefore no real rest to exhausted troops, as a fortress is. A hostile battery manages to get into some *pli de terrain* and, firing even at chance, is sufficient to cause confusion and alarm. In military history, the history of entrenched camps is bound up with capitulations. Bazaine's army, for instance, the best in France, committed suicide by shutting itself up in Metz. If the entrenched camp of Metz had not existed, France would not have suffered the great disaster she did. The failure of the Russian army to arrive in time caused Mack to surrender at Ulm, and the failure of the fleet to relieve Cornwallis at Yorktown caused the British surrender at that place. Wellington maintained himself at Torres Vedras because Massèna never attacked him and because of the presence of the British Fleet.

Therefore we must only retire into an entrenched camp when we can reckon with perfect certainty on an approaching reinforcement. The force shut up then enjoys the advantage of not being weakened by further retreat, and, as a rule, also brings the enemy's operations to a standstill for a time. Military history presents very few examples of the self-deliverance of an army once invested. Massèna's heroic defence of Genoa failed because the relieving army under Napoleon did not arrive in time to save him. And, as the English ships of war were blockading the port, Genoa was conquered by starvation."

Such was to be our own fate also at Kut. We were to be conquered by famine.

On 7th December, I sent a telegram in answer: "That Younghusband with the 28th Brigade and the Cavalry Brigade will be at Sheikh Saad and Ali-al-Gharbi within the next week is what I asked for in my 169 G., and I am glad you can do it, as it altogether alters my situation here. All the reasons you give that I should remain at Kut were fully considered by me before I decided to shut myself up at Kut, knowing well by history the fate that generally awaits any force which shuts itself up in a fortress or entrenched camp. It was your statement that you hoped to relieve me within two months which made my situation critical. Your placing Younghusband's command and cavalry at Sheikh Saad altogether alters matters."

I thought that the speedy arrival of troops at Sheikh Saad, and the bazaar and Arab reports throughout Mesopotamia, always greatly exaggerated, of the arrival of troops and transports at Basra would at once cause the Turks to hesitate and halt in their counter-offensive. But I was quite mistaken, for I did not allow for the large numbers of German officers with them. What I did not grasp at the time was that German Staff officers were directing the operations all through, from and including the Battle of Ctesiphon. Indeed, Field-Marshal Von der Goltz, with a German Staff, directed the Turkish 6th Army away from Baghdad throughout all these latter operations.

Directly our cavalry were observed to leave Kut the Turks began their investment by a converging movement on both banks of the river, north and south of the Kut peninsula, of the principal mass of the hostile forces, whilst their beseiging force moved in extended order against my northern front as close to our trenches as our violent fire allowed them to do. Unable to proceed closer, they halted to dig themselves in and sap—and wonderful progress they made in a night. On our side we were digging in just as hard, for hardly any trenches yet existed worthy of the name. If the enemy had only attacked us in an offensive battle . . . . What an opportunity he lost! But Ctesiphon, and the rearguard action on 1st December had made him very prudent as regards coming to close quarters—which is the reason why he failed to destroy us on Christmas night, as will be seen.

In spite of our artillery fire, in a very few days they had formed a vast network of trenches and communications and covered ways around our northern front, entirely closing up the neck of the peninsula. At the same time a force estimated by me at a division moved on the right bank from west to east, crossing the Shatt-al-Hai some five miles to the south, and then approached Kut on its eastern flank, in order to attack our bridge and block our retreat down river by the right bank. As I have explained already, I had not had time enough to make redoubts to form a protective bridge-head.

In the next three or four days the enemy placed guns around us at all points of the compass, and on both banks of the river. The chief disadvantage of an entrenched camp like this, shaped like the great Indian peninsula, with water on all sides except the north, was that the fire of our guns went from the centre to the circumference, and so was divergent and disseminated, whilst that of the enemy was directed from the circumference to the centre, and thus had maximum effect. This is not the only disadvantage of entrenched camps. They are merely figures, closed in all directions, composed of ordinary entrenchments, which give no such shelter from gun-fire as a fortress does. Moreover, an entrenched camp is unlike a fortress, in that you cannot, without running the gravest risk, denude a front in order to make a sortie in strength. Thus they do not even assure real rest and repose to the troops installed in their perimeter, while the operation of making a sortie is a most dangerous one.

The departure of the Cavalry Brigade had now reduced my combatants to 8,990, of whom the infantry mustered some 7,000. The want of British officers, owing to heavy casualties in Indian units at the Battle of Ctesiphon, was a most dangerous and serious factor in the defence of Kut. I can say without exaggeration that this loss in British regular officers in Indian units endangered the defence, for the few Indian Army Reserve British officers were civilians, and, though full of zeal, were untrained, and thus could not keep the men in hand so much as was desirable. The units had also lost heavily in Indian officers ; and the Indian battalions as a result had practically become armed bands (with discipline, it is true) from want of British officers. Had the system of the Indian Service embodied a full complement of British officers on the scale of a British line regiment, as in the days of the East India Company, I should never have had the least doubt in my mind as to the result of any attack whatever. In our rearguard action on 1st December, General Delamain had actually been forced to put British soldiers of the Dorset regiment into the ranks of the Indian units of his brigade, in order to preserve steadiness in retreat.

The enemy's guns shelled the fort violently the whole afternoon of 7th December, and there were thirty casualties, while the walls crumbled under the shells. The fort had evidently been designed only for protection of Kut against Arab tribesmen. On this date a letter was sent by Nureddin, asking me to avoid useless bloodshed by laying down my arms. He pointed out that my troops were enfeebled and weak in numbers, and it only needed a serious effort on the part of his numerically superior forces to overwhelm us. He complained also that the occupation of the town of Kut, thus exposing peaceful inhabitants to the horrors of war, was against the laws of civilised warfare.

I sent a reply that I had no answer to give to such an absurd demand as the laying down of my arms. But I thanked him for his courtesy in conforming to the usual custom in war in summoning the commandant or governor of a town to surrender before starting bombardment of it. I observed that he was curiously and extraordinarily in error in imagining that the defence of a town was against the laws of civilised war ; that there was no battle of any consequence in Europe and no siege which did not include the attack or defence of a town or village ; and that his friends the Germans not only always occupied towns and villages, but did so in a manner peculiar to themselves.

My former experience of sieges had shown me the great advantages of keeping up the spirits of the troops by means of *communiqués* instilling belief in the arrival of succour from without. I again issued a *communiqué* to the men : that we should now probably be bombarded, but that the effect of heavy guns is much more moral than actual. Stray mules are knocked over, a cart or the corner of a house are destroyed ; but let the men remain quietly in their dug-outs, and they are not touched. They must keep quiet and reserve their ammunition, both rifle and gun, for the hostile infantry. It was only an attack of infantry which I reckoned as serious. I told them that the Army Commander had promised to have reinforcements concentrating at Sheikh Saad within the next week.

The following telegram I sent to the M.G.G.S. on the 7th December shows that I was very anxious regarding the efficiency of the troops, who were now suffering the reaction after the hard-fought Battle of Ctesiphon, the exhausting retreat, and the depression consequent on being locked up in an entrenched camp. " We have now some 8,990 combatants, of whom infantry number only 7,000 ; the British battalions (Norfolks, Dorsets, Oxford Light Infantry and half-battalion of West Kents) are practically the strength of double companies in peace time. The want of British officers in some of the Indian battalions is most serious. For example, the 110th have one British officer ; the list of sick and weakly men unable to march is a very depressing one.

" I have ample ammunition, roughly 800 rounds per rifle ; shrapnel, 590 rounds per gun ; lyddite, 208 per big gun ; the A.Q.M.G. will wire all details. Although I urgently require aeroplanes they must leave for Ali-al-Gharbi this morning—reason, no spare parts. The aeroplane barge was lost in the retirement to Kut, and the aeroplanes will be destroyed by shell fire if they remain here."

On 8th December I heard the news that the Cavalry Brigade had arrived safely at Ali-al-Gharbi on the afternoon of that day, and that General Aylmer was to leave Basra on 9th December to command the troops on the Tigris line,

which were to be formed into an Army Corps. The Cavalry Brigade had been harassed after starting from Kut by Rabiah Arabs and Ajil with 800 horsemen. Practically every Arab was hostile till they reached Beitomeid, but, beyond using the rifle at long range, they were as usual much too cowardly to make any real attack.

On 9th December we were severely shelled from all points of the compass; the detachment on the right bank covering the bridge-head, which had not been entrenched as yet, having left their positions on the sand-hills to drive the enemy's riflemen off some adjacent sand-hills, were counter-attacked and driven across the bridge. This detachment consisted of a double company of the 67th Punjabis under Captain Gribbon, who was shot in three places and left behind. It was impossible to carry him away owing to the heavy fire. It was ascertained later that he was killed. The enemy on the right bank then installed themselves close to the water's edge, and, utilising the banks and water-cuts, fired on our bridge of boats. As there was a danger of the enemy forcing his way across the bridge in the night I ordered it to be destroyed under cover of darkness by explosives. It was successfully demolished during the night of 9th—10th December by Lieutenant Sweet, of the 7th Gurkhas, and Lieut. Mathews, R.E., with a party of volunteers, consisting of Gurkhas and Sappers and Miners.

This was a most gallant affair, the two officers going to the enemy's side of the river, across the bridge, which had sagged in places under the swift-running current owing to waterlogged pontoons, and laying the saucisson, while the others stood by to cut the anchor cables. With the explosion the bridge broke up. The enemy were for some time too dazed to open fire and the whole party escaped. I recommended the two British officers for the Victoria Cross and the men for the Indian Order of Merit.*

On 10th December General Aylmer announced his arrival from India to command the relief force, in a telegram of the same date: "Have assumed command Tigris line. Have utmost confidence in defender of Chitral and his gallant troops to keep flag flying till we can relieve them. Heartiest congratulations on brilliant deeds of yourself and your command."

To this I replied: "Thanks from Sixth Division and troops attached for your inspiriting message. Your confidence shall not be misplaced. Grateful thanks from myself for your message. Am proud to serve under you."

The Secretary of State wired on 10th December, asking for

* Lieutenants Mathews and Sweet were awarded the D.S.O. in the London Gazette of 19th October, 1916. I am convinced that never has the V.C. been more fairly and squarely won than in the case of these two young officers. They volunteered for what appeared certain death, for the enemy had this bridge at the mercy of their rifles at 300 to 400 yards' range and were firing down on to it. They waited all day in cold blood to carry out the operation under cover of darkness—a very different proceeding from doing it on the impulse of the moment.

details of the entrenched position at Kut, with reference to the Tigris, the Hai, Kut town, and Essinn. He enquired whether I had a boat-bridge commanding both banks. I replied on the same day that my entrenched camp was in the peninsula of land formed by the loop of the Tigris on which the town of Kut stands, at the most southerly point of the said peninsula.

"From this southerly point, the entrenched camp extends to the northward some 3,200 yards; its breadth is roughly 1,700 yards. We are invested on all sides except the west as yet. The boat-bridge, which I had brought from its old site outside the sphere of my entrenched camp and placed east of Kut town, had to be demolished last night by volunteers with explosives—a most gallant affair, as the enemy had made a determined attack on the bridge during the day, driving in the bridge-head detachment and occupying the bank at the bridge-head. I have no means of gaining the right bank now except by the gunboat *Sumana* and a barge. We are heavily shelled by enfilade fire all day. I had 199 casualties yesterday. I occupy the liquorice factory and the village on the right bank with two battalions. Essinn is seven miles north-east as the crow flies."

Government at home were evidently anxious about the situation, for another telegram was received by me on 10th December, asking for the following information to send the War Committee:

"(1) Have Turks heavy guns superior to ours?

(2) What barges have been captured or destroyed, and what did they contain?

(3) What is your present view of the situation? How long do you anticipate that you can hold out? Health and spirit of troops and anything else you may wish to bring forward for information of War Committee.

(4) How are you employing the 4.7 guns and where is the *Shushan*?"

I replied:—

"(1) The Turks have four 10.5 centimetre guns, which are certainly superior to our five-inch guns in rapidity and range.

"(2) No. 1 coal and oil barge, nearly empty.
No. 28 barge, containing naval ammunition and tents.
No. 4 barge, supply and transport stores.
No. 11 barge, supply and transport stores, sick men unable to march and a few wounded; 220 boxes of S.A. ammunition and 445 rounds for 13-pounder gun.
No. 31 barge, aviation stores.
Two L-class launches.
All bridge-train pontoons, and several dannocks, sunk by rifle fire from the bank.

" (3) My view of the situation is that our strategic offensive has received the usual check, common enough in history when the offensive has not got sufficient troops nor a constant flow of reinforcements to keep the offensive up to its high-water mark (Hannibal, Charles XII, and Napoleon all failed for the same reason) ; whilst the defender, retiring more and more into the interior, gains time for above factors to weaken the offensive, and draws nearer supplies and reinforcements not available for him at the outset of the struggle.

" This situation can be quickly remedied by rapid concentration of forces and relief of my beleaguered force, uniting all forces at Kut for final advance on Baghdad : example, Wellington's resumption of the offensive after his retreat from Burgos to the Portuguese frontier.

" The fighting value of my troops has naturally much decreased since Ctesiphon, though discipline maintains. I am very anxious as to the result if enemy makes a determined onslaught with very superior numbers. We are constantly shelled all day and I am very anxious to be relieved in say ten or fifteen days. I am doing all I can by appealing to the troops on the ground of their good name and patriotism. I have over 800 sick, and am convinced that there should not be more than 300 at the outside.* When we are relieved these troops require rest on the line of communications.

" (4) My 4.7 guns are in horse-boats, but I am endeavouring to mount them on land."

On 10th December the enemy delivered a heavy attack. They pressed us severely all day along the northern front, and were only kept from closing on us by our heavy rifle fire. They exhibited the same reluctance to assault as they had at Ctesiphon. The enemy lost heavily, and we could see many dead bodies lying thickly in the open. They pressed us very severely. The fort especially was heavily attacked, and severe pressure was brought to bear on my northern front, where the Turks were entrenching and sapping close up to our trenches, and were only contained by a tremendous rifle fire from our people. I was very anxious, for a sudden assault in great numbers would have carried all before it, considering the paucity of British Officers with the Indian troops, and their *moral* at this time. I was also worried by the great expenditure of rifle ammunition. In apparent anger at the repulse, we were heavily bombarded on 11th December, our casualties being 202 killed and wounded.

The attack was repeated on 12th December, at 6.30 p.m. For nearly an hour a tremendous rifle fire was answered by our troops in the first line along the northern front. The enemy

* There was, I regret to say, a considerable amount of malingering among the Indian troops, whose tails were decidedly down. Hence my anxiety should an assault take place. I draw special attention to this paragraph, as this was the greatest source of anxiety to me throughout the siege. It was the reason that prompted me to ask that my relief should be expedited.

did not push the attack home, and the fire ceased at about 7.30 p.m. We ascertained later from prisoners and deserters that the Turks lost heavily—fully 2,000 it was said. They were thickly massed for attack just before dusk, but their hearts failed them again. Our own casualties were 88 killed and wounded.

Our post at the liquorice factory and village on the right bank was also the object of a very heavy rifle-fire fight, but again the enemy did not push it home, not leaving their trenches. These heavy attacks both on the northern front and on the liquorice factory and village were repeated at dawn, but again the attacks were not driven home. This arose solely from the fact that the Turk is not good in the attack ; he will not close on his foe—which is the character that the Russians always give him.

On 13th and 14th December the enemy's guns remained silent, and it was thought that they were saving ammunition after the fierce bombardments of 10th and 11th December, in which we reckoned they must have fired at least 5,000 rounds of shell. Our casualties on 13th December were 122.

I estimated the strength of the enemy's force besieging me on 14th December to be roughly 12,000, with about 33 guns in position around me.

The enemy had now apparently given up all idea of a direct attack, and was conducting regular siege operations. Opposite our north-west sector there was now a complete network of lines of investing entrenchments with communication ways. The Turks worked everlastingly, by day and night, and with astonishing rapidity. Our troops had by now quite good communication ways and entrenchments in all directions necessary, and the *moral* of the Indian troops began to improve as much as the want of sleep and rest—owing to the necessity of digging in and digging deep with the utmost speed—would permit.

The enemy's snipers were persistent, enterprising, and of tireless energy. A counter sniping detachment was organised under Major Booth of the Army Signal Coy., which worked effectively.

Evans and Wilson, the divisional engineer commander, had directed work from 10th to 16th December, following the general lines of the Principles of Defence which I had laid down.

1. Improving communications from the Main Line of Defence to the Second Line.
2. Improving throughout the Second Line of Defence—as I had particularly ordered.
3. Improving the defence of the town on the western, southern, and south-eastern fronts ; for I had always

the idea that in the end we might have to make a house-to-house defence in the town.

The lowness of the water in the river rendered me uneasy about the southern front. It seemed to me to be possible for the enemy to wade across the shoals and banks under cover of darkness, and I watched the eastern and south-eastern fronts accordingly with picquets. The 17th Brigade remained permanently installed at the Fort and the north-east sector. The 16th and 30th Brigades alternately relieved each other as garrison of the north-western section, the brigade relieved taking its place in the Second Line of Defence as General Reserve (available for support to the north-western or north-eastern section, as the case might be). The 18th Brigade supplied the garrison of the liquorice factory village on the right bank, making communication by ferry under cover of darkness. It had two battalions there and two in Kut town, one of which was installed in defence of the southern and south-eastern edges of the town.

In the defence of an entrenched camp, the garrison should be permanently distributed in its own sector of the defence, and not relieved. Such a system is desirable from the point of view of defence and economy in men. In this way the men work voluntarily at improving their defences from sentiments of self-preservation; and—which is more important—they quickly become at home among the bewildering intricacies of trenches and communication-ways which characterise modern defence against modern shell fire. This was the principle I worked on, but it will be seen that when the heavy rains and floods came I was forced—much against my will—to introduce the system of reliefs, for the men were at times washed out of the trenches and were up to their knees in water.

The Arab inhabitants of the town caused me much anxiety. I knew that they were in communication with the enemy—that went without saying—and my anxiety was based on the fact that many rifles must have been buried and concealed. It was certain that the consequences might be serious if the enemy should induce them to rise in the night when an attack was in progress on our northern front. For that reason I took some of the leading inhabitants into custody and announced that I would shoot them if there was the least sign of treachery. In order to put a stop to the looting of the Arabs at the commencement of the siege I had caused twelve men who had been caught in the act to be tried by military commission and shot, *pour encourager les autres.*

It will have been seen in my defence orders that I had ordered all the inhabitants to be turned out of the town, but, on the intercession of Sir Percy Cox on behalf of the women and children, who, he declared, would perish in the desert from

hunger and the bullet of the desert Arab, I changed my mind. When first Sir Percy came to me to ask me not to turn the inhabitants out I told him that it was my duty as the commander of a place about to be besieged to do so. "Very well," he replied, "but I must tell you that all the women and children will perish on the way." I considered that this would have a disastrous political effect in Mesopotamia amongst the Arab population, whom we had engaged to protect against the Turks. Very reluctantly I altered the order to the turning out out of all strangers and permission for *bonâ fide* householders to remain. But this meant, of course. that some 5,000 to 6,000 people remained, while 700 or 800 men only were turned out. I always bitterly regretted my clemency. I did not care how many of the treacherous Arab men were killed or died in the desert—they were deserving of no consideration whatever—but, in the case of women and children, it was a different matter.

On 12th December, I was informed that Government wished to bestow "Rewards or honours for the battle of Ctesiphon on British N.C.O.'s and men of Indian battalions." To this end the Government of India had delegated to Sir John Nixon power to award, for the battle of Ctesiphon, twenty Indian Orders of Merit, forty Indian Distinguished Service Medals to those Indian ranks considered by him to be most worthy of immediate reward, and forty Distinguished Conduct Medals to the British rank and file. Before the advance on Baghdad Sir John Nixon had been empowered by the King to award one D.S.O. and two Military Crosses for November and the same number for December for specific acts of gallantry among officers. The Army Commander left the choice of all the above to me, abiding by my selection, and asked me to wire names, numbers, and corps as soon as I had decided, so that they could be publicly announced.

On 13th December the enemy's trenches were only 50 yards from ours on the extreme left of the north-western front, and working parties could hear each other at work. Brigadier-General Hoghton was anxious about the fort, and asked me to give him 150 British soldiers from the Norfolks (in reserve in Kut town) to reinforce the Oxford and Bucks Light Infnatry, while he begged me to remove from his defence one of his Indian battalions, as it was so shaken that he could not rely on it.

I certainly had no reason to be worried about my rifle ammunition, the number of my casualties—over a hundred a day, and sometimes 200—alone kept this question in the background, but the scarcity of British officers among the Indian battalions was a constant nightmare to me. Our casualties had been very heavy—well over 5,000 if Ctesiphon be included, and the *moral* of some of my troops was shaken seriously.

General Hoghton told me that he could not answer for the safety of his sector of defence unless I removed the Indian battalion, referred to above, away from it at once—and it must be remembered that General Hoghton was himself an Indian service man. I let General Aylmer know all this by wireless and pointed out to him my grounds for anxiety should the Turks make a determined assault, which, as it will be seen, I was soon to experience.

About 16th and 17th December the apathy of the enemy was very pronounced, and this I ascribed to their losses and consequent discouragement, but I reckoned that the expected "52nd Division," which should have finished its concentration at Baghdad, might be arriving soon.

On the night of 17th—18th December, two small sorties were made by the O.C. Fort, Colonel Brown of the 103rd Light Infantry, in which two parties, mixed British soldiers of the Oxford Light Infantry and Indian soldiers, cleared the enemy's trenches close to the fort, bayoneting some thirty Turks and taking several prisoners. Our loss was one man slightly wounded. I believe in a few small sorties, well directed; they strike terror into the enemy; but, to execute many, when troops have always finally to fall back, only lowers their *moral*.

It was evident now that the fort at the north-eastern end of our northern front was the enemy's main objective. His artillery constantly shelled it; large breaches were made, and parts of the wall fell in. As a matter of fact this only increased the strength of the post, for our garrison constantly re-entrenched and blocked up the breaches with sand bags. It was only when this fort was knocked to pieces that it began to be strong—like the old French fortifications at Verdun!

At 5.30 a.m. the enemy opened a heavy gun and rifle fire on the fort. Cheering and bugling could be heard from the enemy's troops, which were massed in their trenches close to the fort, but, under the steady fire of our troops, their assault did not materialise.

On 16th December I issued general instructions in case the Turks delivered an assault on our lines. They were read to the men, so that all should know what to do; but my object also was to give them confidence in themselves and courage for the assault which I knew must shortly be delivered. I also wanted to prepare the men for more digging work.

It will be seen that throughout the siege I never ceased to take every means possible of raising the *moral* of the Indian troops, and a change for the better was noticeable after my *communiqué* of 16th December. Trenches were properly deepened and communication ways greatly improved.

The aeroplane report on 16th December, forwarded to me by General Aylmer, showed that my estimate of 12,000 Turks besieging me was an accurate one.

Brigadier-General G. B. Smith, my C.R.A., had now completely broken down in health, and as Colonel Grier, his successor, was hit in the head by a spent bullet, I appointed the next senior, Colonel Courtenay, R.G.A., as my commander of Artillery. On announcing these changes to Sir John Nixon, I reminded him of our talks formerly about the folly of the system of including so few British officers among Indian regiments. The complement of seven, I urged, can only be called criminally foolish. After our heavy fighting at Ctesiphon I was utterly crippled by this system, owing to the heavy casualties among officers. Captains, and, in some cases, subalterns, were commanding battalions. The result was loss of control.

On 19th December, eleven Turkish prisoners taken in the sortie at night, referred to earlier, were examined. They were all of the 39th Division. They stated that four divisions were besieging Kut—the 35th, 38th, 45th and 51st—and they said they were daily expecting the 52nd and 26th divisions. I did not like this news at all! It meant that about 40,000 men would be besieging me. I wired to Headquarters, and sent a private telegram to Sir John Nixon that I trusted that Government were asking Russia to menace Baghdad seriously, in order to take the strain off me.

Our casualties had now come down to 40 or 50 a day on an average. On 19th December, for example, I see by my diary that we had 57. The enemy were very quiet. I supposed they were waiting for ammunition or reinforcements in order to make a decisive assault on the fort, which was always their main objective. I informed General Aylmer on that date that my defences were now getting quite respectable. I was much handicapped, however, I told him, by having to include the savage warfare fort and the block-houses in my exterior perimeter. I said that I did not wish to be personal, but, seeing that those whom the gods love die young, I hoped that the officer who designed the fort and the block-houses was one whom the gods loved. The famous block-houses I had quickly to demolish, as they made splendid ranging points for the enemy's heavy guns.

On 19th December I received a summary of various official telegrams received by the Army Commander at Basra. By these I learnt of the reports that Von der Goltz was about to invade Persia with 40,000 men, starting from Baghdad, while Marling wired on 16th December that the Russian Minister had received confidential information that 20,000 Turkish troops had crossed the Persian frontier at Kasr-i-Shirin, and that the Russian Commander at Hamadan was expecting orders to send a force to Khanikin. The Secretary of State for India had wired on the 18th December that the Russians intend to occupy Kirmanshah and Khanikin if

possible. This did not seem promising, and it plainly indicated to me that the offensive move on Baghdad would not be a serious one.

That Von der Goltz should design to invade Persia seemed likely enough. It seemed possible to me that, in order to turn the English out of Mesopotamia and at the same time to cause political agitation and unrest in Afghanistan and India, he might make a strategic move through the Pusht-i-Kur, in the direction of Ahwaz and the oil fields. Such was indicated as a bold and simple plan for foreigners to evacuate the Tigris valley down to Basra at least.

In view of the arrival of the relieving force and for other obvious reasons I had endeavoured to find a place at the southern or south-western edge of the town where a bridge could be thrown secretly and rapidly across the Tigris. But, though we had roughly fifty mahelas with masts, the D.E.C., whom I consulted in the matter, declared that it was impossible owing to want of roadway planks and wood work. The piles would not hold in the swift current and oozy mud which formed the bed of the river, and there was no other way of making a bridge except under fire. In reply to enquiries by Aylmer I told him that it would be better to relieve me by the left bank, as we could then join hands. I could not begin to cross until the arrival of the relieving force, for no shelter existed from the enemy's guns, which would enable rafts, etc., to be made. My means of crossing were two tows only, *Sumana* and one launch, two barges, one undecked, and about 50 mahelas, which were unmanageable in the current. The Assistant Quartermaster-General, Divisional Engineer Commander and Marine Transport Officer had worked out that nine days would be required for my crossing the river! At a rate of 700 men being crossed at a time it would quite take two hours for embarking, disembarking and return journey—thus 20 hours were required to get 7,000 infantry over. Three thousand animals—officers' chargers and Maxim Gun mules—at three hours a trip would need 25 trips or 75 hours. Guns, say three field batteries at four hours a trip—five trips, or 20 hours. Field Ambulance—three trips at two hours a trip—six hours. Thirty transport carts—five trips at three hours—15 hours. A total of nine days, with five days added for stores and rations. This might be reduced to six days by working ceaselessly day and night, but I supposed that the Army Commander would bring up his own bridge.

On 24th December, a very heavy rifle fire, supported by artillery, was opened on the liquorice factory and village at 5.15 a.m., and continued until 8.30, but the enemy made no assault, although their trenches were no more than two hundred yards from the village entrenchments. The Fort had been the scene of another fire fight during the night, and determined

efforts had been made by the Turks to cut the wire entanglements, several dead bodies lying on the wires in the morning.

The arrival of Field-Marshal Von der Goltz at Kut now coincided with a determined assault. In the forenoon of 24th December, the fort was heavily bombarded, large breaches were made in the walls, and at 12.30 p.m., the garrison had to retire from the first line of defence in the fort, in which the enemy effected a lodgment. But they in turn were driven out, leaving about a hundred dead in the north-east bastion. I reinforced the garrison of the Fort by the Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry, which now mustered only two hundred rifles. The fire of the Turks recommenced, and was kept up constantly throughout the day.

From the appearance of the enemy's main camp up river and from the unusual boldness of the Turks in attacking in the open, I was certain that they must have received reinforcements, fresh troops whose *moral* had not been shaken at Ctesiphon or on 1st December, at Umm-al-Tubul.

At dusk about 200 dead bodies could be seen outside the Fort, while massing of troops in the rear trenches could be observed, which indicated a new assault.

About midday a 12-centimetres shell swept the top of the house I used as my observation post (the roof of Divisional Headquarters house) killing Captain Begg, R.A., and wounding Lieutenant-Colonel Courtenay, R.G.A., acting C.R.A., and his staff officer, Captain Garnett, R.F.A. Both died later of their wounds.

At about 2 a.m. on Christmas morning, the expected assault was made on the Fort ; the Turks, in desperate fighting, forced their way through breaches into the north-eastern bastion. I sent two hundred of the 48th Pioneers to reinforce the fort garrison, who stood grimly to their posts. After regular " bludgeon " work—as it might be called—with men throwing bombs at each other at ten yards' distance, the Turks were forced to retire into their trenches after bloody losses. The remainder of the Turkish assaulting columns and the reserve could not advance to support the storming parties owing to the curtain of howitzer fire our gunners threw over the Fort.

The Turkish officer who commanded the assault should not have been pardoned for this failure. In an attack of this nature the reserves should be crammed on the heels of the storming parties and assaulting detachments. It is only by piling on your masses that you can succeed, If your advanced parties succeed in effecting a lodgment in the work and are driven out again—as ours were at the Redan on 8th September, 1855, and as the Turks were on this occasion—it is the fault of the commander of the attack. The Turkish division engaged in this assault had just arrived from the Caucasus, and had not lost m*oral*. Its commander was to blame. It

was no time to think of loss of life, for if you cannot afford to lose heavily you should not try an assault.

Other faults that the enemy made were :—

(1) The preliminary violent bombardment, which gave me warning that an assault was pending. (2) Neglect to make another false or feinted attack on another part of my lines, to prevent my sending reinforcements to the fort garrison.

In this attempt to carry the fort by assault, nine battalions were told off for the operation, but only the two which formed the assaulting columns got in ; the reserves did not advance. The Turkish loss was estimated by us at eight hundred to a thousand, but it was ascertained later, in evidence given by Turkish medical officers, taken prisoners at Sheikh Saad, that fully two thousand were killed and wounded.

At the fort we lost 315 killed and wounded, including 17 officers. The defence was very fine, and Lieut.-Colonel Brown, of the 103rd Light Infantry, who commanded the garrison, deserves great credit. The gallant Oxfords lost heavily,* and one company of that fine corps, the 103rd Mahratta Light Infantry, who held a barricade, lost 70 per cent. Casualties elsewhere than the fort were 67, making a total for Christmas Day of 382.†

The repulse of the Turkish assault proved afresh the valour of the troops composing the Sixth Division, and especially did the men of the Oxford Light Infantry add more glory to the history of that famous regiment, so renowned in the Peninsular War.

After the Turkish assault had been repulsed, the rest of Christmas Day was absolutely peaceful. The garrison of the fort was busy re-entrenching and making the place much stronger ; I turned my attention to strengthening my second line of defence ; and Field-Marshal Von der Goltz returned to Baghdad.

On 26th December we saw two large columns, which I estimated at two divisions, cross from the left to the right bank at the Shumran Bend, where the enemy had thrown across a pontoon bridge, large camps being pitched on the right bank seven or eight miles west of Kut town. This movement, combined with that of much transport to the westward at the same time, gave me the impression that the enemy was beginning a retirement, but it soon became apparent that he was dividing his forces and was placing a part of them on the right bank.

Two sepoys, from the 22nd and 66th Punjabis, deserted to the enemy on 27-28th December. Both were fired on, but, unfortunately, were not hit.

* Which compelled me to take the Norfolks away from the 18th Brigade, and to reinforce the fort garrison with them.

† Our casualties for the siege up to this date (4th—25th December, both inclusive) were 1,625.

On 29th December the enemy sent in a flag of truce to the fort, asking for permission to bury their dead. As the letter was addressed to me by the O.C. of a Turkish regiment in the vicinity of the fort, I replied that I would grant an armistice of four hours to bury the dead if the Turkish General-in-Chief wrote asking me to do so, but that I could not grant an armistice unless the Turkish supreme commander himself asked for it. There would have to be a neutral zone, I said, into which small unarmed parties from either side could go, and, if the Turks used the flag of truce as a cloak to get troops up into the forward trenches, as they had done on similar occasions at Gallipoli, I should open fire with all my guns at once. No answer was received to this communication for two or three days.

On 29th December I telegraphed to Aylmer that it was said by prisoners that the 36th Turkish Division was following the 5th Composite Division (already outside Kut) and was supposed to be concentrated at Baghdad by 21st December. I pointed out that we had quite sufficient strain on us already, and that I felt certain he did not require reasons from me to show why I was anxious on the score of more reinforcements reaching the enemy. I hoped that if he started by 3rd January from Ali-al-Gharbi, as I understood he would do, he would get to Kut much sooner than the 10th, as Ali-al-Gharbi is only about 56 miles distant. I asked for news as to what reinforcements were coming up river, and further for what news they had of the Russians.

In case my first line of defence became no longer tenable, I ordered my G.S.O.,I., to draw up a scheme for withdrawal to the Middle line. This will be found in the Appendix to Part IV.

CHAPTER XIII

FIRST ATTEMPTS AT RELIEF

In answer to enquiries by Aylmer, I calculated that I should have no more than 5,000 rifles fit to co-operate with his force when it arrived, and this would include some 400 Sappers and Miners. I should have three batteries of R.F.A. of four guns each, but with carrying capacity (wagons) reduced fifty per cent., one howitzer battery of four guns, two Naval 4.7 in. guns in horse-boats, with the Divisional Ammunition Column reduced to 60 per cent. of normal. The A.D.M.S. calculated that some 2,000 wounded and sick would have to be sent down at once. This was in view of Aylmer and myself again advancing on Baghdad as soon as I was relieved.

One division of the enemy was seen going eastward towards Essinn on the left bank on the evening of 28th December, and later a transport column took the same road.

The enemy now turned their attention to shelling the Divisional Headquarters in the town every day, our whereabouts evidently having become known to him through the Arabs. Several very close shaves were experienced, the roof and upstairs room being frequently swept. Several men in hospital also were killed by shells bursting among the wounded in that place. Our casualties now varied between 26 and 36 daily in the ordinary course of events.

Aylmer informed me on 29th December that roughly two divisions, with a brigade of cavalry, composed the relieving force, and he asked for a detailed description of the entrenchments around me. This I furnished.

General Headquarters informed me that there was no news of Russian movements in Persia. Fron this I gathered with more certainty than ever that they were not making any serious movement on Baghdad ; otherwise they would have moved with their forces united *en bloc* on Kirmanshah and Kasr-i-Shirin. Instead, their force was disseminated into several columns traversing Persia, apparently in order to occupy the several important points in the country as one would in a permanent occupation. I felt sure Von der Goltz, who was directing the Turkish strategy in this field of operations, would read it in the same way.

The enemy's snipers had now turned their attention to shooting the women and children of the town when they went to the

river in the evening to draw water. The Arabs in the pay of the Turks were also using hollow bullets of the fashion and calibre of the Snider, and several of our people were horribly wounded in consequence.

Two or three bundles of seditious documents in Hindi, signed "Bande Mataram," were discovered laid against our wire entanglements. These called on the Indian troops to rise and murder the British officers and join their brothers the Turks, who would pay them better and give them grants of land.

Several cases of self-mutilation were detected about this time among the men in one of the Indian battalions, who shot off their trigger fingers and pretended they had been wounded. In order to prevent the powder scorch from showing, they had in each case bound a piece of thick cloth round the finger and hand before discharging the rifle. All these men—twelve or fourteen of them—were tried and received heavy sentences. There were also two or three desertions by Indian soldiers to the enemy on 29th and 30th December, and I had several Courts Martial for cases of cowardice before the enemy and sleeping on post.

On 1st January I received a telegram giving Aylmer's project of operations for the relief of Kut. In this he said that I should naturally realise that in drawing up an appreciation of his advance for relief of Kut it was necessary to give safe dates for arrival, allowing for opposition *en route*. The relieving force could only organise as it arrived at Ali-al-Gharbi; the dates of starting from there allowed for this. Those dates also depended on the arrival of ships from Basra. He objected to pushing forward troops prematurely from Ali-al-Gharbi for my relief and using forced marches; but he was of course ready to take very great risks in the matter should my condition absolutely require it. For example, he said he could, in a very extreme case, start the advance of a column from Ali-al-Gharbi, on 1st January. If there were no opposition such a column could possibly reach Nakhailat on 3rd January, and, by sending troops after them on ships without stopping at Ali-al-Gharbi, they might possibly amount to a division on that date. He could not, of course, say what the enemy would do under such circumstances. We might have to fight them at the Essinn position—and this seemed probable.

"But even in that case the pressure on you would be greatly relieved," he went on. "If the enemy do not stand between Nakhailat and Kut such a column could join you at Kut on the 4th. Remainder of Corps could not possibly reach Nakhailat till the 8th and Kut till the 9th. I would greatly prefer to make a start from Ali-al-Gharbi with one Division on 3rd January, as proposed in my telegram of December 29th. In such a case, if your condition demanded it, one Division could

be at Nakhailat on the 5th and the rest of the Corps on the 8th. By far the best plan, however, from the point of view of the relieving force, would be to advance all together from Sheikh Saad, or its vicinity, as a combined Corps. Nakhailat could possibly be reached on the 8th, though the 9th would be the safer date. Such a plan, though slower, would be far more certain to gain its objective It is essential to postpone adoption of actual method of advance as long as possible, as hurry means inevitable want of organisation and consequently decrease of efficiency. You may, however, rest assured that everything possible will be done to hurry relief to the utmost if your circumstances really demand it. I know you will give full weight to such considerations before you give any definite date by which you must be relieved."

On 1st January, 1916, a sepoy of the 103rd Light Infantry, who was on sentry duty, fired two shots at an Indian officer, and, jumping the trench at the fort, tried to escape to the enemy. He was caught, tried by Summary General Court Martial, condemned to death and shot at sunset.

I had a very near shave from a shell about sunset on the top of headquarter house from a gun which suddenly opened fire from the right bank. A shell also went through Major Davie's room, and a third through the house, badly wounding two poor fellows in the Divisional Signal Company. My headquarters were constantly and accurately shelled throughout the siege, for the Arabs of the town used to pass out at night, by swimming the river, and convey information to the enemy. On the same night to which I refer, a shell penetrated the hospital roof and exploded amongst the wounded, wounding two of them afresh.

I replied to General Aylmer's plan of operations for my relief in a telegram on 1st January, saying that as the principle of Economy of Force demands always that a commander should unite all his forces in his hand before he moves forward against the enemy, while this concentration must not take place within striking distance of the enemy, I was naturally in agreement with him in his intention and desire to unite the bulk of his force with the advanced guard at Sheikh Saad before finally moving forward to my relief. I said also that I should only call for immediate help from Younghusband (who was in command of the advanced guard) in case of necessity, which I did not think would arise, as the enemy were evidently worried and anxious as regards his advance and were in consequence turning their direct attack or siege into a passive investment, and confining their chief activity to bombarding us at night with big guns. I also informed him that a hostile aeroplane, the first we had seen, had passed over Kut in the forenoon, going eastward. I repeated this telegram to General Headquarters at Basra.

My troops had stood the test of a determined assault on the

fort very well indeed. The repulse of the Turks on Christmas Day had given a feeling of confidence amongst the troops, and at present I had no misgivings on the score of their *moral* and hoped that the Turks would again try an assault, as a second repulse would greatly discourage all ranks amongst them.

On 2nd January the enemy shelled the town vigorously with eighteen guns, heavy guns as well as quick firers; a Turkish corporal deserted to us and informed us that a new division had arrived in the past two or three days, and, on the 3rd, large bodies of the enemy's troops, estimated at two divisions at least, moved eastwards from the main Turkish camp. I thought at first they were going to attack the fort, but it proved that they were bound down river by the left bank to oppose the relieving force; on this date also I came to the conclusion that the bulk of the enemy's force must have proceeded down river in this way by night marches in order to oppose General Aylmer's advance, leaving a division at least (possibly two) to contain me at Kut. At 4 p.m., a column of fully 2,000 infantry with six guns and transport moved east along the same road without concealment. The camp on the right bank up stream was now observed to be much reduced in size.

In my diary I see that our total casualties, from 4th to 31st December, were 1,774.

On 5th January, a large column, some five miles in length, estimated at at least 8,000 men with guns, was seen moving east towards Essinn by the left-bank road. On this date a telegram was received from the Corps Commander, asking me if I agreed with General Headquarters' estimate, of January 3rd, of the distribution of the enemy's forces—11,500 infantry and 41 guns on the right bank near their own bridge, 12,000 infantry and 18 guns downstream from Kut, and probably at Essinn. He concluded that the two divisions reported in my telegram of the 3rd, as crossing to the north of Kut and going east, came from Shumran Bend, not from the right bank. He asked what I thought, and if I could estimate their effective strength, as this might assist in identifying them. He said he would try to clear up the situation around me by aerial reconnaissance from Sheikh Saad as soon as the weather permitted, probably on 7th January. The condition of the aeroplanes made reconnaissance from Ali-al-Gharbi very dangerous. He asked my opinion, in case the enemy defended the Essinn position, as he believed they would, how many troops he would have to leave at Kut to hold me.

The General Headquarters telegram, to which the Corps Commander referred, arrived after the above-quoted wire, and estimated the enemy's forces on 4th January, as follows:—

On the right bank, nine miles west of Kut at the Shumran Bend, the 45th and 36th Divisions, totalling 11,500 bayonets

with 41 guns ; on the left bank, facing me, the 5th composite, 51st and 38th Divisions, totalling 12,900 bayonets and 24 guns. On the left bank at Essinn 35th Division, total 2,500 men with 18 guns. At Sheikh Saad on both banks were four battalions, 800 cavalry and 1,200 camel corps. A grand total of nearly 30,000 combatants with about 83 guns.

Of these divisions, Headquarters said, all but the 36th had been at some time or other severely handled by us and had probably lost in *moral*. It seemed unlikely to G.H.Q. that the enemy would give Aylmer an opportunity of inflicting a decisive defeat on them down-stream of Kut, but they thought that the enemy would concentrate in force up-stream. The Army Commander considered that, after relieving me, Aylmer ought to entrench in the most suitable position in the neighbourhood of Kut and await further reinforcements. He suggested that Aylmer should consult with me as to the most suitable position in which he should instal his force at Kut, and that he should suggest the nearest place where all the remaining reinforcements could be concentrated.

I replied to Aylmer that I thought that the enemy's strength was more like 20,000 with 32 guns, but that they had lost 4 to 5,000 men killed and wounded since the siege began. I expected that they would try to contain me with a division whilst the battle was fought at Essinn.

But my estimate of 20,000 and 32 guns was much under the mark. The G.H.Q. estimate was fairly accurate, as we afterwards discovered ; they actually had about 30,000 men with 70 or 80 guns at this time.

The units and composition of the relief force was now known to me to consist of two Indian divisions returned from France—the 3rd (Lahore) Division under Major-General Keary, and the 7th (Meerut) Division, commanded by Major-General Younghusband. I learnt that General Kemball, late M.G.G.S. to Sir John Nixon, was now in command of a brigade.

The enemy sent an officer with a flag of truce to me on 2nd January. However, I did not cease my fire because of this. The officer brought a message from the Turkish Commander-in-Chief, asking me to facilitate the task of burying the dead who had fallen in the assault on the fort on Christmas night. The stench from the bodies was appalling, while many still hung on our barbed wire on the side of the fort on which the assault was made ; he also informed me that Captain Gribbon, of the 67th Punjabis, who had fallen into their hands, wounded in the combat at the bridge-head, had died of his wounds. The Turkish officer, who was brought blindfolded to my quarters in the town, talked French. I asked him about the projected expedition to Persia, and remarked that with their usual enterprise and energy the Turks would no doubt not stop in Persia, but would invade Afghanistan.

And then why not India, a very rich and fertile country? He told me that he thought Field-Marshal Von der Goltz must be at least 76 years of age. I gave him a box of Maspero cigarettes for Nureddin, and said—in the Turkish fashion—that I would send an answer "to-morrow." I thought it very ungrateful of Nureddin to open a tremendous bombardment on us as soon as the officer reached the Turkish lines, with my last box of Maspero's! He pumped all his big guns and quick-firers into Kut town, but we had only 24 casualties.

I saw the *Firefly*, which, it will be remembered, had fallen into the hands of the Turks and had now been repaired, move down river round the Shumran Bend and take up a position to shell us with her 4.7 forecastle gun—but she was kept in respect by our 5-inch guns.

The enemy had received a reinforcement of two more divisions, and we saw them marching eastward down river well out of range to reinforce the troops who were holding up Aylmer.

On 6th January I sent a personal wire to Aylmer, with the idea of instilling the idea of a turning attack into his mind. I was of the opinion that this was the proper remedy to apply to the question of the relief of Kut. I alluded to the wide turning movement I had made at the battle of Kut in September I knew that he was a student of war, but I very much feared the usual frontal attack, which so many of our generals favour, and which I looked upon as doomed to failure.

On 7th January, General Gorringe, now at Nasiriyeh, was to begin a demonstration towards Kut along the Hai, and was to spread reports, I was told by Army Headquarters, that he was going to relieve Kut. I never heard what happened to the demonstration, but there was some fighting, I believe, between the Arabs and a small detachment, the enemy claiming to have inflicted severe loss on our detachment when it fell back on Nasiriyeh.

On 8th January a very hard-fought engagement took place between General Younghusband's division and the enemy's forces some two and a half miles below Sheikh Saad; the Corps Commander said in his wire that it would appear he was up against the whole of the Turkish forces, with the exception of those facing me. It was anticipated that further heavy fighting was probable. He added: "Will you consider the advisability of making a sortie and let me know?" I read between the lines that Younghusband had been roughly handled.

I replied on the same date:—"I was unaware of the fighting below Sheikh Saad—on the left bank, I suppose. I do not know what numbers contain me here. The Turks are hidden in trenches, which surround me. No air reconnaissance came over on 7th as promised. I have contemplated a sortie to harass the Turks on their retreat past me on the left bank. I

have also been thinking out what I shall do if you are repulsed, and it is in my mind in such a case to attempt to cut my way out; it would be well worth trying if I could carry off even two-thirds of the garrison in doing so. Such a step means abandonment of all guns and all wounded and sick. We have no means of reaching the right bank in sufficient rapidity and secrecy to make effort successful. I think I could fight my way out on the land side, left bank, crossing the maze of trenches by portable ramps which I am having made now. Such a step would only be a desperate necessity. It cannot be in any way advisable at this juncture. I trust and hope you can give me better news soon. If Turkish forces have gone to meet you they cannot be strongly entrenched and their convoys of munitions have to go all the way from here." This wire I repeated as usual to General Headquarters.

At 4.45 p.m. I received the following wire from General Headquarters, dated 8th January :—

"Army Commander directs you not to resort to expedient of cutting your way out except in desperate extremity. We have plenty of reinforcements here, which are being sent up as empty shipping is returned from up river, and also daily by road. Will Corps please keep Townshend fully informed of situation?"

I had misunderstood Aylmer, and thought he was sounding me as to whether I could cut my way out. Shortly afterwards I received a wire from Corps Commander :

"On January 5th, aeroplane reported enemy strongly entrenched astride the river about two miles west of Sheikh Saad. Numbers as follows :—4,500 on north side of river, 6,500 on south side. The latter includes some 2,000 cavalry. Enemy have no bridge with them."

Later in the day another telegram came from the same source :—

"In asking you to consider advisability of making sortie, of course I only meant by way of creating a diversion and thus relieving pressure here. There is absolutely no idea yet of your having to cut your way out. I do, however, contemplate some delay in reaching you, as I am opposed by very considerable numbers."

Reading between the lines of this telegram, it seemed to me that the situation was really serious. Finally I heard from the Corps Commander that night that : "Owing to the fatigue of the troops, on account of yesterday's efforts, I have been unable to make any progress to-day." He had troops on both banks of the river; he estimated that he was opposed by

15,000 Turks; his own casualties were approximately 3,000; and his forward progress would be slow till reinforcements arrived. I was certain now that the situation was very serious, though of course I did not say so to anyone; and I turned my thoughts to my food supply for the garrison. This Colonel Annesley explained to me was as follows—on 8th January :—

British troops	..	30	days' rations.
Indian „	.. ..	29	„ „
Grain	.. ..	8	„ „
Fodder ..	.. ..	7	„ „
Tinned meat	.. ..	8	„ „
Meat on hoof	.. ..	17	„ „
Tea ..	.. ..	15	„ „

I received a private telegram from Sir John Nixon on the 8th January. He informed me that the doctors had invalided him and that he expected to have to start in a week or so. Before leaving he hoped that Aylmer and I would join hands. He said he had told Sir Beauchamp Duff that he was handing over to Aylmer, as next senior, and that he had recommended me to succeed to the command of the Army Corps of the Tigris. The policy of our advance on Baghdad was criticised in the papers at home, but strongly defended by Lord Crewe. Sydenham, in the House of Lords, called it a failure, but all were glad to think that, from the point of view of the fighting-man, it was a glorious failure.

Another telegram from Aylmer, concerning the fighting of the Relief Force near Sheikh Saad, reached me late at night on the 8th. He said that Kemball was entrenched on the right bank, astride the telegraph line, with six battalions. On the left bank two brigades held a trench for three miles of line at right angles to the river. He had six battalions in reserve on the left bank. From examination of prisoners he estimated that he was opposed by at least 15,000 infantry and cavalry, including Arabs, who were very numerous. He did not think he was able to outflank the Turks on the left bank with his present numbers. His forward progress would be slow till reinforcements arrived, and he trusted everything would be done to expedite their arrival.

Colonel Annesley reported on this date the loss by theft of 1,000 bags of flour. This I put down to the troops, who had to take some bags of flour in the first hurry of the defence to erect barricades when I first began to put Kut in a state of defence, no sand-bags being available. I am not at all certain that this theft was the only one during the siege. There seemed to be always a leakage, in spite of all precautions. The difference between our estimated supplies and the actual

amount which materialised was very considerable, but was accounted for theoretically as wastage due to the cleaning of the grain.

In my diary of 9th January, I find: "I wired to Aylmer again asking for an aeroplane on 9th January so that I can get a rough estimation of the Turks containing me here. There is no doubt that if I attacked their main camp on the left bank and took it and drove away steamers, etc., it would bring the Turks' main force back here very quickly. But I must have no doubt about winning. My troops are far different from what they were two or three months ago."

Hope was again raised by the arrival of a telegram from Aylmer: "The enemy has retired up stream (from Sheikh Saad) and I am pursuing. Heavy rain makes movement most difficult."

But these hopes were modified on the next day when he informed me that his troops were greatly exhausted by wet and cold. I noted that they were still divided on both sides of the river—General Kemball and six battalions at Sheikh Saad on the right bank, and the remainder of the Corps on the left. No air reconnaissance, he said, had been possible owing to inclemency of the weather; present reports indicated that the enemy were retiring on or beyond Orah.

I suggested to Aylmer that Nureddin might halt behind the Chubibat salt water canal at Orah, in order to gain time to enable this new army corps reported to be on the point of arriving to materialise. One division was due on 20th January, and "it must be remembered that all the latest arrivals of Turkish reinforcements have been far ahead of the time indicated by our Intelligence Department." The Chubibat Canal I believed to be no obstacle worth considering. It could be crossed anywhere at that time of the year, except at the northern end. I repeated the wire to General Headquarters.

It was evident that Nureddin was fighting delaying actions in order to give time for some other portion of the Turkish army to join him. This was only my opinion, but to me it was obvious. Also it was plain that he had retreated in the night unmolested, which did not look like a defeat. I communicated these thoughts to Aylmer on the 10th.

Bunting was displayed on the Turkish steamers on the morning of 9th January, ships being dressed; and cheers were given in their trenches. We ascribed this to the fact that the British Force at Gallipoli had re-embarked, and this proved to be the case.

On the afternoon of 10th January, four or five parties of infantry, none of them under 200 men, walking in groups and not in military formation, apparently lightly wounded men. came past us from down river on the left bank, going west,

We saw a considerable number of tents on the right bank which had not been there before. There was much activity in the Turkish main camp this afternoon. A convoy of 600 camels came from west to east by the right bank, crossing the Shatt-al-Hai and going into the Turkish main camp. Aylmer wired me that his losses were 3,793 wounded at Sheikh Saad alone. He could not give the number of dead ; but in ordinary proportions his dead, I reckoned, must be 600 or 700. He said that the Turks had retired to Essinn and were in position there on both banks. He spoke of very bad weather—wet and cold. We had beautiful weather in Kut on 10th January, but at Sheikh Saad the mountains were much closer to the river.

At 10 p.m. I received a telegram from Corps Commander, saying that the Turks had returned again,* and were entrenching a line on both banks of the Wadi (creek or river). This I supposed to be the Chubibat Canal at the top of the Orah bend, about nine miles up stream of Sheikh Saad on the left bank.

We could tell by intercepted wireless messages that General Aylmer was attacking the Turks in their position on the Wadi, on 13th January, and that General Younghusband was turning the position whilst General Kemball held them in front. At about midnight of 13th-14th January, I received a wireless from Aylmer, to say that at dusk Kemball was holding the enemy along his eastern front two miles along the Wadi. Younghusband, evidently making a turning manœuvre, had pushed round the north of the enemy's position and claimed that his right flank was almost up to the river Tigris. I hoped that now the enemy would be well beaten.

On 14th January a wireless, intercepted in the morning, showed that the enemy were supposed to be retiring, with Kemball starting in pursuit. The enemy's losses were supposed to be heavy. At 11.35 a.m. General Aylmer's telegram showed that the battle had been of an obstinate and indecisive nature, but the enemy seemed to be on the retreat as large masses were observed moving west. The turning movement of the 7th Division had been held up by Turkish forces facing north and fighting on an east to west line. The action had been close and continuous till nightfall. General Kemball had attacked the enemy's front with the 28th Brigade, but had been repulsed, and had withdrawn to the east bank of the Wadi.

Our engineer officers estimated, from sketches they had made, that the enemy had dug fully thirty miles of investment works—entrenchments, communication ways, etc.—around Kut on both banks. When it is remembered that the German lines of investment around Metz in 1870 were roughly twenty-four miles, some idea of the extent of the Turkish investment

* I believe that Nureddin was actually retreating when Von der Goltz arrested his retreat, superseded Nureddin with Khalil Pacha, and ordered the latter to entrench on the line of the Wadi.

works will be arrived at. The actual circumference of the investing lines was roughly fifteen miles, but in most places the lines of works were triple.

There are no trials in military service, not even excepting the trials of a commander in a retreat, to approach in any way those of the commander of a besieged force. The responsibility of command in battle in the field is nothing compared with it, for you are free and can advance on the offensive, adopt the defensive-offensive, or retreat if you wish to avoid action. Besieged, one is in a constant state of nerves, be your head as cool as an ice-chest. All watch you and hope for news.

Every evening I used to go through the hospitals to see the poor fellows lying wounded there, and have a chat with them. All wanted good news—and I always acted as if I were full of spirits; but it was acting all the time. Several times I was told: "You'll get us out of it, General. We know that. After getting us out of the First of December you'd get us out of anything."

They all had a touching confidence in me. . . . Surely no General has ever had a more devoted command than my Sixth Division.

I had no illusions as to Aylmer's difficulties, or his real progress. It began to look as if he could not relieve me before large Turkish reinforcements arrived—which had been my fear from the first, and was the reason why I protested against relief in two months and demanded it in one. Had Aylmer's command been an all-British one, there would have been no doubt of the success of the relief force in my mind, nor in any of those serving under me.

I was anxious and irritated at the dearth of news I received from Aylmer, and perhaps unjustly so. But I have no doubt that, if I worried him, he, with his frank, loyal, and brave character, forgave an anxiety not unnatural under the circumstances, for there was serious demoralisation amongst a large proportion of my troops, and other troubles, of which it is not desirable I should speak here.

We had now reached 15th January—the date indicated to Aylmer as the one beyond which it would be hazardous to expect me to hold out, owing to the expected arrival of Turkish reinforcements—and I began to be much concerned at the slow progress of the relief force. I shut my force up in Kut on the distinct understanding that I was to be relieved in a month. We had now been besieged for six weeks. The Relief Force had fought two indecisive actions—pushing the enemy back, it is true, but only three or four miles at the most—and had suffered at least as heavily as he, and, I expected, much more heavily. If the progress of the relief force was so slow now, what would it be when the Turkish reinforcements arrived?

On 16th January, the Corps Commander informed me in a telegram to the Army Commander, which he repeated to me, that, from the fact that I had seen guns and infantry coming back to the Turkish main camp on the left bank, it was indicated to him that the enemy's intention was to delay the Relief Force in a defile and to bring a large body from their bridge above Kut or Essinn on to the right bank, in order to fight there or beyond it and to cut his communications. He said he was throwing a bridge across the Tigris just above the Wadi and was putting all the troops of the 7th Division on the right bank. If the enemy did not advance, he would do so when he had finished this, and he would endeavour to outflank the enemy's position in the defile* from the right bank.

I sent the following telegram to Aylmer: "On behalf of myself and the Sixth Division, I wish to express the deep appreciation we feel at the gallant efforts of the relieving force under your command and our sympathy at your losses. We hope to thank you *de vive voix* before long."

The enemy were very busy all day on the left flank of their northern investment, digging and putting up barbed wire on the left bank east of the fort, apparently to prevent us from making a sortie in force at night by that exit to aid an attack by Aylmer by the left bank of the river.

On this date, Field-Marshal Von der Goltz, with his staff of German, and some Turkish, officers, was seen inspecting the lines in front of Kut. One of our guns fired on the group, which took refuge in a trench. I was very annoyed with the officer who ordered this gun (at the fort) to be trained on the Field-Marshal and fired without my orders, for I had a great respect for the man whom I considered the leading strategist in Europe. I ordered the fire to cease at once.† I was told afterwards by Turkish officers that the shell nearly got the Field-Marshal.

On 17th January the news received by wireless from Aylmer was not very cheerful. His advance was delayed, he said, by atrocious weather, which delayed the construction of his bridge. His losses in the engagements of 7th and 13th January had amounted to over 6,000 killed and wounded, and this wastage was considerably in excess of the reinforcements he had received since he advanced from Ali-al-Gharbi; he ended by saying that his fighting strength at the moment did not exceed 9,000 combatants. This was bad enough news, but my doubt as to the possibility of the Relief Force being able to join hands with me was confirmed by the receipt of the series of wireless messages with which I end this chapter.

* This defile is caused by the proximity of the marsh to the river on the left bank.

† Compare the reconnaissance by Massèna in 1810 in front of the lines at Torres Vedras. The British officers would not allow the guns to open fire on him, but a shot was fired wide of him to warn him to go.

From Corps Commander (i.e. General Aylmer) to General Headquarters (copy to 6th Division), 16th January, 1915 :—

" The position of affairs must be frankly faced. The enemy is blocking the entrance of the Wadi-Nakhailat defile with very strong works, and, judging from his dispositions within them, they have been designed to resist a heavy bombardment from across river as well as an attack in front. His bivouac shelters seem to indicate I shall have opposed to me his whole 52nd Division and two regiments of the 35th and 38th Divisions. But of course I cannot be certain of this. Emplacements for 19 guns have been seen, eleven of which are designed to fire across the river. Behind in defile there is a single line of entrenchments through ' y ' of Sannaiyat, between marsh and river, probably one and a half miles long. Behind again is the Essinn position.

" It is impossible, in my opinion, to take the first position by a *coup-de main* from this side alone, without losing half the force. It was my intention to cross the 3rd Division and Cavalry Brigade to right bank, directly the bridge is finished, and thus enfilade enemy's position. Even by this means I do not think our progress as an entire force can be anything but very slow. Information indicates that reinforcements may have begun to arrive at Kut, and these may soon amount to a very considerable number. On right bank below Kut, at present, there do not seem, at outside, more than 2,000 men, and rain is evidently rendering the Hai crossing difficult for transport. The best plan seems to me for Townshend to cross the river during the night with such able-bodied men as he has got in the mahelas and other river transport available, and march well round Essinn on the right bank. I would cross about one division and Cavalry Brigade at same time and march to meet him and bring him back here. The opportunity is now favourable and may cease directly enemy send troops down right bank, which may be very soon. On December 20th, Townshend informed me he had 50 mahelas, besides other river craft. If these still exist it should be about sufficient for his purpose, though he would have to leave sick and men unable to march, and to destroy most of his guns and material. If Townshend thinks that this is possible, I shall issue orders for him to do so. Addressed G.H.Q., repeated 6th Division, Commander of which is requested to wire at once feasibility of passage and earliest date on which he can be ready, remembering that opportunity may not recur."

Before I could send an answer I received the following telegram from the Army Commander, addressed to Corps and repeated to me on 17th January :—

" I do not in any way agree with your appreciation of the

situation, or that same calls for Townshend to take the extreme step you propose.

"Only circumstances that could in my opinion justify this course would be a demoralisation of your force, which I have no reason to suspect.

"You have been opposed from Sheikh Saad by 35th, 38th and 52nd Divisions, some Gendarmerie and Cavalry, totalling rather over 15,000, with at the outside 41 guns, and you have twice defeated them.

"Townshend has been contained by 45th and 51st Divisions, totalling possibly 8,000, with 17 guns.

"Townshend has reported strong column, estimated at one division and 12 guns, retiring to main camp west of Kut. Enemy have further suffered losses estimated by you at 4,500 at Sheikh Saad, and 2,000 at Wadi. You therefore should have between you and Kut not more than 5,000, and possibly 27 guns.

"The total of your losses should almost have been made good by reinforcing units--your bridge gives you freedom of manœuvre. The course you originally proposed, namely to employ part of your force on right bank, should not only promise success but afford you opportunity of inflicting severe blow on enemy and effecting speedy relief of Townshend. I cannot believe that position in front of you can equal in strength those attacked and captured by us in the past, which had been in preparation for four months.

"The course you now propose for Townshend in your telegram under reply would be disastrous from every point of view to Townshend's force, to your force, to the whole of the forces in Mesopotamia, and to the Empire, and I cannot sanction it. There is no reason to suppose enemy has yet been reinforced by a sixth division, and the possibility of it arriving only emphasizes necessity of prompt action. Both acknowledge."

On 17th January, I sent a wireless message to the Corps Commander that I supposed he would now advance by the right bank with his maximum force, leaving his minimum force entrenched to guard the ships; it was not likely that the Turks could take the offensive on the left bank so long as I held Kut and blocked his steamers and barges, etc.

I reminded him that I had informed him on 7th January and 22nd December that it was impossible for me to gain the right bank with rapidity or secrecy unless the relieving force arrived on the right bank, south of Kut, where he would be covered from the enemy by the important obstacle of the Hai, now five feet deep at the ford. I reckoned that I could put only 4,000 men at the outside across in one night. That would leave 5,000 more combatants in Kut, in addition to wounded,

sick and followers and departmental men. "Animals, officers' chargers and machine-gun mules come to about 3,000, and would take three hours a trip ; 25 trips require 75 hours. The three field batteries would require some 20 hours. But all guns and munitions would have to be destroyed, also animals, as none could be crossed in the one night which is essential for the success of the sortie. Such slowness in crossing the river is appalling—there is no other word for it—but there is no possible means of a speedier solution of the problem."

It will be seen that I had good reason in telling Evans at the beginning of the siege, when I was prevented by the weariness of the troops from throwing across a bridge opposite the Hai River, that this would have a serious bearing on the defence.

Telegram from the Corps Commander to General Headquarters (repeated 6th Division), dated 17th January, 1916 :—

"I understand your telegram to mean that you desire me to get to Kut in such a way as to hold that place together with Townshend, at least until his force can be removed entirely. That is, that you do not wish Townshend's breaking out to form any part of my plan.

"If this is so, the plan suggested by Townshend is opposed to your views, and in my opinion less likely to succeed than what I suggested, as my remaining opposite Kut while Townshend took several days to get across river would lead to Turks assaulting the place when half denuded of troops. The only way to relieve Townshend without the necessity of his breaking out is for me to force the defile and join hands with him by left bank.

"This I shall attempt to do by the means already indicated, namely, cross the river with part of my force, enfilade enemy, and then assault his position. I have only just succeeded in completing bridge, owing to extreme difficulty in getting it up from Sheikh Saad and reconstructing it here on account of storm and torrents of rain, the quantity of material, and only one Company of Sappers and Miners. The country round is a sea of mud and animals can hardly move. I am using my utmost endeavours to expedite carrying out plan, but it must be recognised that conditions have been extraordinarily unfavourable. A comparison between works in front of me and those elsewhere is difficult, but these cannot be turned except in a modified manner by enfilade fire from opposite bank. I have now just heard that bridge is broken again."

On 18th January I sent the following wireless in reply to the above :—

"Let me make it clear that my project is not the right bank ; I thought that it was your idea after you had met

with such difficulties and had suffered such losses. If you could plant your guns on right bank *en enfilade* of the Turks entrenched on the left bank it should dislodge them, especially as your fire would force the Turkish ammunition and food convoys to make a detour northward. No, my project would have been to have advanced on the left bank with all my force united in my hand, since the bulk of the hostile force is on the left bank. Perhaps I should have entrenched a minimum force of two battalions on the right bank to guard my ships, as I did in my action of Kut-al-Amara, in September last, on the principle that the enemy must be defeated in order to gain my objective. At the same time it seems to me that if you arrived here on the south bank as suggested in my telegram of 17th January, and installed your guns east and south of Kut town, on the right bank, their enfilade fire would facilitate our crossing the river."

In view of the above telegrams I deemed it desirable to indicate to Aylmer what I should do if he were unable to relieve me, repeating the message to the Army Commander. So I wired on the same date that to attempt a sortie in force on the right bank, with possibly 3,000 men, threatened destruction, as the enemy in trenches 300 yards from the bank must detect the movement and then it would be destruction when morning came. It meant the abandonment of all wounded, sick, guns, transport, etc.

My idea was to fight on from trench to trench and house to house, till no more ammunition was left. I said that I knew that, when all hope is past, and not till then, the traditions of war in military history justify a general in making terms on fair conditions; like, for example, Junot's French force in Portugal in 1808, which was transported in ships, with arms, guns, and baggage, and landed in France. "As long as I hold Kut," I said, "the enemy cannot take the offensive against us towards Amarah, as his steamers and barges are absolutely necessary. If you cannot relieve me and cannot maintain yourself where you are, you will have to retreat; the weather here has been very bad, the rain last night has been heavy and the trenches have two feet of water in them—in many cases more—causing much discomfort and hardship for the men. I think this is the end of the wet weather; the inhabitants say so."

From General Headquarters to 6th Division (repeated Corps), dated 18th January, 1916:—

"It would appear you contemplate the practical evacuation of Kut with abandonment of stores and guns after relieving column has reached there. This is by no means the intention of Army Commander. On arrival of Aylmer's column our force should be in superior strength to enemy and neither Kut

nor guns nor stores must be abandoned. If Aylmer's force is so disposed along Hai to south, with portion of it to north on your right flank, and is unable at first to clear enemy from your front, there would appear to be no difficulty to combined force maintaining position whilst remainder of reinforcements concentrate at Essinn or east of same. By first week February all columns now marching should have reached Sheikh Saad, including drafts to complete Sixth Division to service strength.

"Force will then total four full divisions, except for two Brigades of artillery, and we should be able to assume offensive with a view to clearing front and securing permanent position further west covering Kut.

"Consider and advise Aylmer, repeating here what dispositions of corps on arrival would fit in best with above plans."

In answer to the above message of the Army Commander, I said that the reason why I contemplated the abandonment of stores and guns was because the Corps Commander said it was the best thing I could do. Personally I had never wished to abandon Kut, and I had made my stand there because I judged it my duty to hold up the Turkish forces and give time for reinforcements arriving in Mesopotamia to concentrate on Amarah and Ali-al-Gharbi, although I knew well the usual fate of a force which shuts itself up in an entrenched camp. But I had bargained to be relieved in a month. I was delighted to hear that Kut was not to be abandoned.

CHAPTER XIV

FURTHER ATTEMPTS AT RELIEF

On 19th January the persistent rain ceased, and we got a fine day. Heavy gun fire was heard to the eastward—evidently Aylmer's guns on the right enfilading the Turkish position at Umm-al-Hannah on the left bank.

I received a message from General Aylmer, on 20th January, that he was ready to attack. One of his two divisions, the Cavalry Brigade, and some guns were on the right bank in order to enfilade the right flank of the Turkish entrenched position on the left bank. Their main position stretched from the marsh to the river.

On this date I issued orders for the possible move out of Kut to support Aylmer. These will be found in the Appendix to Part IV.

On the evening of the 19th we were astonished to see over 2,000 Turkish infantry, with large numbers of camels, coming back from the direction of Essinn on the left bank, and bound for the Turkish main camp up river. This would leave only some 4,500 Turks in front of General Aylmer, according to our estimates. We could hear his guns bombarding the Turkish position all this day. He informed me that he would assault the position at daybreak on 21st January; and, on the evening of the 20th, we could plainly see shells bursting in the distance.

On 21st January, at 2 p.m., I received a wireless from the Corps Commander, giving very bad news. His assault had been repulsed. His troops had remained between one and two hundred yards of the enemy's front line; only one battalion, the Black Watch, had succeeded in getting into the enemy's trenches, and they had been bombed out again. They intended, he said, to resume the bombardment and assault again in the afternoon. This was the worst news we had received during the siege.

It rained hard all day; the swollen river had flooded my first-line trenches, and even part of the middle line, to the great misery of the troops. There seemed no doubt that, work as we might, the water would compel us to abandon the first line of defence, thus practically isolating the fort.

On 21st January we had fourteen days' full rations for British and Indian troops, fodder up to the 25th, and thirty days' grain for the animals, with ten days' tea for British units,

and we had also ten days' supply of country flour, purchased from the inhabitants. I decided to put the troops on half rations and lay hands on all the foodstuffs in the town.

It will have been seen that in my orders for the defence of Kut, I distinctly ordered all foodstuffs to be commandeered, but the Military Governor had found it easy to buy; so my orders had not been carried out in this respect. This was due to my not having drawn special attention to the order, I suppose—not surprising, seeing that I was occupied night and day with orders for the actual defence of the place. As I now felt convinced that our defence would have to be a long one, I determined to seize every kind of foodstuff, so that equal distribution might be made to everyone during the siege.

We found large stores of grain in the town by means of a house-to-house search, and by offering rewards for information as to concealed grain and foodstuffs, for the well-to-do inhabitants tried to conceal their food.

In the evening I received another message from Aylmer, that the afternoon assault had failed also. He announced a third assault for the afternoon of the morrow. He feared his casualties had been very heavy. Another telegram from him spoke of renewing the attack on 22nd January, but said that he looked upon it rather as a forlorn hope.

He said that the only way I could help him was to make a sortie on a large scale, endeavouring to defeat what was in front of me, and returning to Kut again. Success would probably cause the enemy to retire from the defile in front of him. He asked if I could do it soon.

Telegram from Corps Commander to 6th Division (repeated to G.H.Q.), dated 21st January, 1916 :—

"We have made two assaults on enemy's entrenched position here without success.

"I shall renew attack to-morrow but acknowledge that at present it appears rather a forlorn hope. My losses have been very heavy. The only way you can help us is to make a sortie on a large scale and endeavour to defeat what is in front of you, returning on to Kut again. Success would mean that enemy now opposing me would probably retire from this defile. The enemy's losses have undoubtedly been very considerable, both from artillery and infantry fire. He has received two battalions at least as reinforcement, from where I cannot say, as air reconnaissance is impossible. If you can do this please do it soon."

This was followed by another wire from Aylmer to General Headquarters (repeated to 6th Division), dated 22nd January :

"It has rained incessantly this afternoon and to-night

The country is now in a most flooded and boggy condition, and movement of troops most difficult, their suffering great. On right bank G.O.C. 3rd Division reports river to have topped the bank in one place and to be rapidly forming large marsh to west of position recently occupied by him, thus creating serious obstruction to any further advance up the river by that bank. *I am forced to abandon my intention,* re *attacking enemy's position to-morrow, as troops in front line have been withdrawn without my orders to vicinity of entrenched position occupied by them two days ago, about* 1,300 *yards from enemy's trenches. They are greatly disorganised owing to unsuccessful attempt to storm enemy's position, making it utterly impossible to send them back again at present.*

I shall send my appreciation of situation to-morrow."

I have italicised a passage above to draw attention to the gravity of this telegram. Such an operation as Aylmer suggested to me required to be combined to be successful, apart from other considerations to be reckoned with and arranged for. For example, directly I moved out of Kut to fight my way out eastward—and to do this I must assault the enemy's investing works and redoubts of great strength in the open, wading up to the waist in water in places, and under an enfilade artillery fire—our north-west section of defences would be immediately attacked and assaulted by the bulk of the investing troops. The minimum force I should have to leave behind at Kut, to defend a great extent of front, would not amount to much, since my entire strength in bayonets was only 6,450 on 21st January. In making a sortie in force, in which it was intended to return, I might well lose Kut and everything in it and be finished off in the open between the two forces. Therefore this was a measure which required much forethought and plans calculated between Aylmer and myself.

I wired to him that night, saying that I was undergoing the same weather conditions at Kut as he. All hands were engaged in fighting the inundation, which was driving us out of our trenches, I suggested that he should hold on for reinforcements, for, from what he said, I did not think another assault would succeed. I had put all my people on half rations and thus could hold on another 27 days. I also mentioned that about 500 camel corps and 3,000 infantry had passed Kut, going from east to west on the left bank, that is to say, coming back from the battle. "I cannot understand why all these troops are returning from opposing you."

The Corps Commander further wired to General Headquarters (repeated to 6th Division) on 22nd January, 1916 :—

"I regret there is no doubt in attempting to assault enemy's position yesterday we have suffered a severe reverse in spite

of greatest gallantry of troops, and our losses are very heavy. The troops in retiring removed as many wounded as possible, but many must remain near enemy's front-line trenches. I am sending a request to Turks for six hours' armistice to bury dead and bring away wounded. For the present I shall hold the line about 1,300 yards in front of enemy's position and a reserve line behind. The troops' condition may be regarded as prohibiting advance for the present.

"My proposals will follow on receipt of further information of extent of reverse. Weather is atrocious and floods increasing."

Telegram from Corps Commander to General Headquarters (repeated to 6th Division), dated 22nd January, 1916 :—

"At yesterday's assault Black Watch greatly distinguished itself, but suffered heavily."

Telegram from Corps Commander to General Headquarters (repeated to 6th Division), dated 22nd January, 1916 :—

"From detailed statements taken from six prisoners, including one officer, which follows, it will be seen that force in front of me yesterday consisted of whole of 52nd and combined 35th and 38th Divisions, *plus* two battalions 51st Division, *plus* 26 guns. Drafts have evidently been lately received by units. Allowing for previous losses this force would admittedly amount to at least 9,000 infantry. I am quite certain Townshend has observed most carefully, but, if all troops reported by him as marching westward during last fortnight be taken as additionals and deducted from enemy in front of me, I should have only had to fight about 5,000 yesterday, not allowing for losses. My *parlementaire* to-day, who was towards front position, himself saw two regiment and one artillery commanders, and Khalil Bey's name was given as being in command. He is reported to have superseded Nureddin.* My losses are very heavy indeed. I cannot yet ascertain numbers in all cases, but the 9th Brigade alone lost over 1,000 and 27 officers. The troops are not at present in a state to assault such a position, even if only held by 3,000 men ; they have done most nobly all that is possible in the face of the severest conditions. I cannot call on them to do what is impossible in their present state. I will naturally do all I can to ascertain the remaining strength of the enemy in front of me.

"I arranged an armistice up to 6 p.m. to-day, and a certain number of wounded have been brought in and dead buried, but the Turks have taken into their lines the wounded immediately in front of their trenches and were most active in doing so."

* This was quite correct. Von der Goltz superseded Nureddin when he began to fall back in front of Aylmer in the Sheikh Saad fighting, *pour encourager les autres*. Khalil is uncle to Enver Pacha, the War Minister, and very popular with the troops owing to his courage.

There was no doubt left in my mind after this message. It was plain that Aylmer could do nothing to aid me until reinforcements reached him. Sir Percy Lake, the Commander-in-Chief in Mesopotamia, who was at Basra, evidently took the same view, for on receipt of the above telegram he wired to Aylmer, repeating the wire to me, to say that, as he gathered he had deliberately decided that a further advance was impossible at present, he suggested that Aylmer should establish himself on the best position he could find, holding both banks of the river, connected by a bridge behind him, unloading all his river-craft and sending them back empty. Gorringe had been sent to Amarah to organise the reinforcements as they arrived there from Basra, and send them on to Aylmer. The date on which these reinforcements would arrive depended on the rapidity with which Aylmer could free his river-craft. He informed Aylmer that he was responsible for the line of communications in his immediate rear, and he must take measures to prevent Arab raids. He left Aylmer two steamers, so that, if the enemy retreated before him, he would be able, when following them up, to take forward his supplies by relays, and could pass troops from one bank to the other. Aylmer was to take immediate steps to carry the above measures into effect.

With regard to Aylmer's suggestion that I should make a sortie on a large scale, I considered that it was perfectly impossible at the time. We were engaged night and day in fighting the floods which had invaded our trenches and threatened to wash us out of Kut. The enemy also were driven out of their first-line trenches, and we punished them severely with our fire when they had to fall back before the rising water, and run for safety across the open. The trenches presented the appearance of canals, with an amazing network of mole-like heaps standing out of the inundation. If I had had no enemy to oppose me, it would have been a difficult operation even by day to get my troops and guns through that veritable lake of mud, with enormously deep trenches covered by water. In order to cross these obstacles, I was having hand-bridges and ramps constructed by the sappers, but these appliances could not be made in a day. They took six.

I cannot imagine that any commander has experienced greater difficulties than I did in this siege. Every kind of trial, every kind of obstacle is to be met with in that accursed country, Mesopotamia. After great exertions, with an enemy attacking us, we managed to dig ourselves in at Kut. As soon as the defences began to be respectable, and two decisive assaults of the enemy had been repulsed, rain came to swell the river, to aid the dreaded floods of the Tigris, to delay and hamper our relief force. Finally the floods came—to wash us out of our trenches, to force the men to live standing in water up to their knees, and consequently to fill the hospitals with

disease and sickness. What worries, what trials, what anxieties were experienced by me in that siege!

In a wire to the Army and Corps Commanders, on 23rd January, I pointed out that I now had to face the situation from the point of view of my own command. We had already passed 15th January, beyond which date Aylmer had said, in the appreciation of the situation he made before he advanced to my relief, there would be a danger that relief would be impossible through the arrival of Turkish reinforcements. It will be remembered that I bargained to be relieved in a month from 4th December; at the furthest by 10th January.

On thinking over the situation, and seeing that Aylmer had shot his bolt for the present, I had arrived at a choice between three resolutions, if Aylmer and Sir Percy Lake considered that two brigades of infantry and one battery—the expected reinforcements—were insufficient to effect my relief, given the disheartened state of Aylmer's combatants, now reduced to 9,000.

A. I might extricate my force my making a sortie by the right bank, as Aylmer had suggested on 17th January. In this case I should make straight for Sheikh Saad, twenty-five miles away, by the desert route, asking him to send a column half-way to stretch out a hand to me. Between 28th January and 3rd February, I hoped that night conditions would enable me to get about 4,000 able-bodied men across the river in the night, to start on this march. I should take those of most service to the state, engineers, sappers, gunners, signallers, flying men, British infantry, Indian infantry, cavalry and a proportion of medical personnel. The slightly wounded, sick, weak, and all unable to march would be left behind, guarding the wounded in the hospitals under a Brigadier-General, who could make terms with the enemy. All guns would be destroyed. The *Sumana* with two barges would endeavour to run the gauntlet. We should carry 200 rounds a man, great-coats, and two days' food on our backs.

B. Or I might stay at Kut and prolong the resistance till the last cartridge or last ounce of food remained—on the defence of Saragossa or Genoa principle.

C. Or I might preserve the force to Government by negotiating with the enemy to let them have Kut whilst my force marched through their lines and joined Aylmer, as Junot did at Lisbon, in 1808, under the Convention of Cintra, whereby the French force of 20,000 men were taken with their arms and baggage in British ships to France and landed there, in exchange for Lisbon. In this case negotiation should be begun while I had food to argue with. No terms are ever given by your opponent if he knows you have no food left and starvation is at hand to compel you to capitulate. All history proves that.

I concluded by saying that I considered "A" the best course.

I had given up all hope of the Russians, but I again asked that General Baratoff, now at Kasr-i-Shirin, be told of my serious situation at Kut, and be invited to press Baghdad seriously.

I got a reply to my telegram to the Army Commander on the same day, that he "still hopes to be able to effect your relief." He said that he would be better able to express a definite opinion after he had reached Aylmer's headquarters, about 28th January; he thought B and C proposals unnecessary and out of the question, and that I should prepare to carry A into effect, but must keep the matter secret from my troops. I should also consider the possibility of co-operation with the relieving force on the assumption that Aylmer's operations might take the form of an advance in force by the right bank, leaving a minimum force to contain the Turkish army on the left bank.

Aylmer replied to my proposals in a telegram to Army Headquarters, repeated to me, which confirmed my impression that he did not believe he could relieve me even when his expected reinforcements did arrive. This telegram, dated 23rd February, referred to my telegram containing the above proposals, as follows :—

"I know Army Commander disagrees with me, but I must again affirm that in my opinion, as previously expressed, and as confirmed by recent experiences, I am not in a position to reach Kut so as to effect entire relief of Townshend. I believe, even after reinforcements now on their way arrive, we shall have very little chance of success. I have now only 9,000 infantry left and have just suffered reverse. I am very doubtful of *moral* of a good many of the Indian troops, especially as I have now the gravest suspicion of extent of self-mutilation amongst them. It is my deliberate opinion, formed after the gravest consideration, that the best course would be to adopt Townshend's plan, as suggested by me originally and vetoed by Army Commander.

"If this plan 'A' is now sanctioned, I require earliest possible information, as I must cancel arrangements now under way for sending down all available ships, which I must retain in order to carry out plan 'A,' and effect my own retirement when this is done. Details only would be arranged between Townshend and myself. All ships now being sent down with wounded should be returned instantly with troops to Sheikh Saad, or later to Ali-al-Gharbi, so as to assist difficult task of my retirement from this position, where I am in actual touch with enemy and have a most difficult road to follow on both banks, owing to recent flood.

" Reference Townshend's telegram of to-day, I have already expressed my opinion. These columns seen by him do not necessarily indicate deductions from force in front of us. They are much more likely reliefs, Townshend not being shown troops going the other way."

On 24th January, I informed Aylmer that I was quite willing to make the attempt to break out by the right bank, but it must be understood that the enterprise was entirely dependent for success on luck ; if the Turks discovered that I was crossing the river at night it would be bound to fail. I was of the opinion that the plan suggested by the Army Commander that Aylmer should advance in force along the right bank, leaving a minimum force on the left bank to contain the enemy there, offered more certainty. The Shatt-al-Hai River was now a very formidable obstacle, and the enemy would be very careful of putting a large force on the right bank east of the Shatt-al-Hai, with the chance of Aylmer throwing them into it. The enemy had only one crazy mahela bridge over the Shatt-al-Hai. I pointed out that, though I had nominally only twenty-two days' food left, still, by commandeering all the grain and flour in the town and eating the horses, I could hold out much longer, though there was the difficulty of feeding the Arab population of 6,000. Perhaps the Commander-in-Chief in Mesopotamia could obtain more troops from India so as to ensure our relief. In regard to sources of food outside my army rations, we had wheat, atta for 34 days for the troops and 33 days for the town's people. The oil mills would work for 30 days more. In addition we had 2,400 maunds (80 tons) of barley in the town, and 11,000 maunds in the wool-press village, occupied by us on the right bank. We had 3,000 horses and mules available for food. This question of the horses and mules I had not brought forward till then, as I should not have been justified in killing the horses, and so rendering the division inefficient for service in the field, until Aylmer had told me that he did not think he could relieve me. Europeans would eat the horse-meat. My assistant director of supplies had for some time past been purchasing wheat atta in the town, and the Military Governor had been feeding 600 indigent Arabs every day, who had no money to purchase food, and he had been selling grain purchased by us at Government rates from the Arab merchants to 3,000 Arabs daily at a low rate. On wheat atta alone, including the 22 days' rations I had in hand, we could live for 34 days longer still, which was not counting barley meal and horse-meat.

I concluded by saying that, when the enemy discovered that Aylmer was marking time and waiting for reinforcements, he would in all probability make a supreme effort against me, taking troops from in front of Aylmer. I repeated this telegram to Army Headquarters.

The great business of a siege is the food question; it is all-important, and is always a severe problem. The fighting usually is secondary in importance to the food. It was the same in my defence of Chitral, it was accentuated at Kut, and in consequence I have divided the periods of the defence into three—the first period "on full rations"; second "on half rations"; and third "on starvation rations with great hardships."

Telegraphing to Aylmer on 25th January, regarding breaking out by the right bank and the meeting of his column with mine, I said that the meeting of the two columns on a compass bearing was quite uncertain, but his column could have instructions to fall back again if they did not see mine. I repeated that being able to cross the river to the right bank at Kut was merely a matter of luck; the covering party that landed first would certainly have to drive away snipers and patrols, who were at work along that bank night and day. Given a successful crossing, I should make for Musjid (Imam Munsur, five miles south-east of Kut town) which is a conspicuous landmark indicating the road to Sheikh Saad, its bearing 105° east from Kut town. There was also no doubt it was occupied by an infantry outpost, which we should perhaps have to rush, but the Turks kept bad watch at night. I did not consider the Turkish mounted troops or their commander, Subri Bey, as at all formidable. I know they would keep at a respectful distance if I could manage to bring a couple of 13-pounders with me. The crossing of the river without detection was most difficult and "success lies in that difficulty alone."

I said also that: "In the defence of a place a general is expected, when no further hope of relief remains, to try to cut his way out with what men remain with discipline and good hearts. It is a duty that the general owes to his country. He has to leave his wounded and sick to the mercy of the enemy, who, when civilised, respect them (and the Turks have always acted well in this respect). But, with a swollen river on all sides except one, and that side flooded and impassable, this is a good example of the difference between theory and practice, and desert Arabs in hordes on your flanks and rear remind one that the theory applies rather to Europe than here.

"But it is a terrible thing for me to leave behind the wounded and sick and so many weakly men, who have all trusted me. Government knows how they have fought under me, and now I am going to abandon them like a thief in the night. I know my first duty is to try to save able-bodied men to the Government, and I was the first to tell you and Sir John Nixon that I would attempt to cut my way out if you were repulsed. As you will remember I said that as a desperate necessity only I would cut my way out, or endeavour to do so.

"I hope you will confer with the Army Commander before the thing is finally settled, that you cannot appear before us by a *coup de main* on the right bank, when you get your reinforcements. I should consider Subri Bey, with his mounted troops, and possibly two battalions, no obstacle at all. Kemball will tell you how I disposed of Subri Bey, by a night march and attack at Kutunie, when he and his force bolted at dawn just as I got to him.

"I do not see why we should not hold on here for another two months, as my food wire will have shown you yesterday, in which case Army Commander could call troops from India or even Australians from Melbourne.

"The Turks will be very chary of trying to rush me after what they have received here already, and they have now a practical example of what loss they can inflict on you from behind their beloved trenches. The Turk is mediocre as a fighter in the open, but formidable behind a wall or trench. The divisions in front of you are the same as fled when we closed with them at Essinn, last September, and the same as at Ctesiphon, but it was of course because their flank was turned and we attacked in columns on fronts of not more than 600 or 700 yards a brigade.*

"I hope you will weigh the matter well with the Army Commander. Remember my being able to cross the river without detection at night is, I may say, the case of spinning a coin."

It will be seen that the Army Commander favoured my plan "A," that I should endeavour to break my way out on the right bank. In conversation with my second in command, General Melliss, when showing him the proposals I had made, he expressed the opinion that my second, "B," was the best, for by breaking out I could only hope to get 3,000 or 4,000 men away by mere luck, and would have to leave behind 4,000 to 5,000 combatants, all my wounded and sick, destroy guns, etc., and he thought that our best course and duty to the Empire was to carry on, and so hold up the Turks.

To my mind there was no doubt which was the correct course—to cut my way out with all available combatants when all hope of relief was past, and this I would most certainly have done, but the local conditions made the operation impossible, for we were surrounded on all sides but one by an impassable river, making it very problematical as to whether I could get even 3,000 men across in the given time. Under those circumstances Melliss was right. I thought out the matter all that night, and decided by morning that breaking out by the right bank was such a touch-and-go, such a risky

* I believed that Aylmer's infantry were very greatly extended in his fighting at Sheikh Saad and Umm-al-Hannah, in which case there could have been no weight in his assaults. Hence the cause of the failure.

matter, that possibly would end in a real disaster, that I would stand by my proposal "B"—to hold on at Kut whatever happened.

This resolution was still further strengthened by the fact that large stores of concealed grain and food stuffs had just been found in the town, my orders for a house-to-house search having borne fruit. My staff informed me that I could hold on now for 84 days. I said that I would make Kut a second Plevna, and accordingly sent the following telegram to Aylmer, repeating it to General Headquarters, on 25th January:

"I have carefully thought out the situation, and wish to sum up my ideas and give you my views and the conclusion I have come to.

Para. I. (*a*) Not only is breaking out a pure question of chance, a spin of the coin, owing to having to cross the river undetected at night, but in case of success I can only extricate some three thousand odd combatants, leaving five thousand behind, exclusive of wounded, sick, and all guns.

(*b*) By thus doing, Kut falls at once, and this lets the Turks immediately take the offensive down the Tigris, for so long as I resist at Kut they cannot get their ships, munitions, stores, etc., past me.

(*c*) You could not remain where you are or you would share my fate. You would have to retreat in a hostile country and I doubt if you could remain at Amarah, while Nasiriyeh would most likely be surrounded and fall.

(*d*) Thus we lose all the territory we have gained in last year's campaign, and it becomes disastrous and inglorious. It is for (*b*) (*c*) and (*d*) above that I arrested my retirement from Ctesiphon and made a stand at Kut. It was my own decision.

(*e*) While I hold Kut the Russians from Kasr-i-Shirin can seriously menace Baghdad.

Para. II. I have now placed all food in the town under Colonel Annesley, my Assistant Director of Supplies, collected all the foodstuffs and rationed inhabitants. I now find that we can last for 84 days.

As regards food supplies, great stores of barley have been discovered. Besides all this I have 3,000 animals to feed on.

Para. III. As regards the want of *moral* of a good part of your Indian troops, I have the same here in a more modified form; it is my handful of Norfolks, Dorsets, Oxfords who are my sheet-anchor here.

We do not want inferior drafts of Indian recruits from India, such as my battalions were filled up with after the battle of

Kut-al-Amara, in September last. Melliss, Delamain, Hamilton, and Hoghton will bear me out in this. One or two good all-British divisions are what we want.

Now is the time to demand good white troops from overseas—an army corps to save and hold Mesopotamia, if Government considers it worth holding. The Germans knew that Mesopotamia and not Egypt is the best avenue of approach to India, and that is why all these German officers are here now. I take it Mesopotamia is worth holding, and we shed much blood to gain thus far.

Para. IV. I repeat I think the Turks will not have the heart to leave their safe trenches and overwhelm me in my trenches and houses. They would lose terribly at that game, and have lost heavily when they tried to do so.

Para. V. The floods will arrive, I suppose, in February; this will compel the Turks to recede and the side with most gunboats obtains the sea-power, which enabled me to take Amarah last June.

Para. VI. The more I think out the situation, the more convinced I am that the best and highest *rôle* I can play is to follow the example of Osman Pacha at Plevna, where his defence held up the Russian advance and saved Constantinople.

In the same way the defence of Kut will save the whole of the Basra province. It will give the Army Commander time to get solid reinforcements and render the campaign a glorious one instead of letting it end in disaster."

Aylmer quickly agreed with these views, for I at once received the following telegram from him to Headquarters, repeated to me.

"It must be acknowledged that Townshend's numbers 69/117 and 118/G throw a completely new light on the situation.

"I am delighted that his food supplies are now found better than I could know from previous telegrams, which pointed to February 17th as the date to which he could subsist on half-rations.

"I quite recognise that there are other factors beside food with which he may have to contend in his splendid defence; but this new information, had it been communicated to me before, would have certainly modified much that I have unsuccessfully attempted to do and what I have proposed.

"I certainly no longer desire to adopt Plan 'A.'"

On 26th January we saw what we estimated at a division moving eastward from the Turkish camp above Kut on the right bank, evidently in order to cross the Hai, in the neigh-

bourhood of Mhairiyah, where they had mahelas moored, and, we supposed, a crossing, for we had seen men working there and taking timber and piles to this place. I supposed the destination of this division was the Essinn position on the right bank.

I informed Aylmer of the above, and also explained the reason why I did not bring up the food question before :—

" (*a*) There was no necessity to do so until the question as to whether I could be relieved or not arose. The question was that I was to be relieved by 10th January, because, after that date, by the Corps Commander's own appreciation of the situation, there would be a danger of large Turkish reinforcements reaching Baghdad, and so making my relief impossible. I have ample rations to last over that date. Thus I do not see in what way Aylmer's action would have been modified had he known I had so much food.*

" (*b*) The Arab population in Kut is 6,000, distinctly hostile to us and for the Turks. Such numbers in our midst are a positive danger, and I have to keep a considerable force of military police to watch them by day and by night. I have searched houses for arms. I did not want to search for food until obliged, as will be easily understood. I knew there was much food in the town, but not so much as we discovered."

I now heard that Aylmer's reinforcements amounted to 11,000 bayonets, 18 field guns and 6 howitzers, plus 4 Territorial Artillery field-guns. These reinforcements would raise his force to 20,000 bayonets, 1,300 sabres and 74 guns. They were expected to have reached him by 7th to 10th February.

The amount of casualties in the 6th Division from 3rd December, 1915, when it entered Kut, to 26th January, 1916, amounted to 2,225, which total did not include deaths from disease.

On 26th January I issued the following *communiqué* to the troops :—

" The Relief Force under General Aylmer has been unsuccessful in its efforts to dislodge the Turks entrenched on the left bank of the river, some fourteen miles below the position at Essinn, where we defeated the Turks in September last, when their strength was greater than it is now. Our relieving force suffered severe loss and had very bad weather to contend against. They are entrenched close to the Turkish position. More reinforcements are on their way up river and I confidently expect to be relieved some day during the first half of the month of February.

* The business of a relieving force is to relieve a besieged garrison, and not to prolong a siege.

" I desire all ranks to know why I decided to make a stand at Kut during our retirement from Ctesiphon. It was because so long as we hold Kut the Turks cannot get their ships, barges, stores and munitions past this place, and so cannot move down to attack Amarah. Thus we are holding up the whole of the Turkish advance. It also gives time for our reinforcements to come up river from Basra and so restore success to our arms ; it gives time to our allies, the Russians, who are now overrunning Persia, to move towards Baghdad. I had a personal message from General Baratoff, commanding the Russian Expeditionary Force in Persia, the other day, telling me of his admiration of what you men of the 6th Division and troops attached have done in the past few months, and telling me of his own progress on the road from Kirmanshah, towards Baghdad.

" By standing at Kut I maintain the territory we have won in the past year at the expense of much blood, commencing with your glorious victory at Shaiba, and thus we maintain the campaign as a glorious one instead of letting disaster pursue its course down to Amarah and perhaps beyond.

" I have ample food for 84 days, and that is not counting the 3,000 animals which can be eaten. When I defended Chitral some twenty years ago, we lived well on atta and horse-flesh, but, I repeat, I expect confidently to be relieved in the first half of the month of February.

" Our duty stands out plain and simple. It is our duty to our Empire, to our beloved King and Country, to stand here and hold up the Turkish advance as we are doing now, and with the help of all, heart and soul with me together, we will make this defence to be remembered in history as a glorious one. All in England and India are watching us now and are proud of the splendid courage and devotion you have shown. Let all remember the glorious defence of Plevna, for that is what is in my mind.

" I am absolutely calm and confident as to the result. The Turk, though good behind a trench, is of little value in the attack. They have tried it once, and their losses in one night in their attempt on the Fort were 2,000 alone. They have also had very heavy losses from General Aylmer's musketry and guns, and I have no doubt they have had enough.

" I want to tell you now that, when I was ordered to advance on Ctesiphon, I officially demanded an army corps, or at least two divisions, to perform the task successfully. Having pointed out the grave danger of attempting to do this with one division only, I had done my duty. You know the result, and whether I was right or not ; and your name will go down to history as the heroes of Ctesiphon, for heroes you proved yourselves in that battle. Perhaps by right I should not have told you of the above, but I feel I owe it to all of you to speak

straightly and openly and to take you into my confidence. God knows I felt our heavy losses, and the sufferings of my poor brave wounded, and I shall remember it as long as I live. I may truly say that no General I know of has been more loyally obeyed and served than I have been in command of the Sixth Division. These words are long, I am afraid, but I speak straight from the heart, and you see I have thrown all officialdom overboard. We will succeed; mark my words. *Save your ammunition as if it were gold.*

CHARLES TOWNSHEND,
Major-General.
Commanding 6th Division."

Kut-al-Amarah.
26th Jan., 1916.

It will be seen that in this *communiqué* I had conveyed bad news, and at the same time endeavoured to animate the defence by taking all into my confidence. It had a most excellent effect on the garrison. The Brigadier-Generals told me of the fine spirit it had aroused in the troops. I received messages from Indian officers, indicating their absolute devotion—notably in the case of the 7th Rajputs, the Indian officers of which battalion went to their C.O., Colonel Parr, in a body, and asked him to write to me as follows :—

" They would like me to know how pleased all the regiment was at receiving my *communiqué*. They say that ' we never had any anxiety about the situation, and we should like the General to know that we are with him to the last breath.' " This incident alone will show how the *communiqué* appealed to the Indian troops. The wounded in hospital quickly told me during my evening visits how the British part of my force regarded it.

On the same date another Turkish division was seen marching eastward by the right bank past Kut, evidently to operate against Aylmer's troops. All moves on the part of the enemy, it goes without saying, were communicated at once to the Relief Force by our wireless.

Sir Percy Lake wired me on 27th January from " Camp " : " I am always glad to have your ideas, and your suggestions are most valuable, whilst your undaunted spirits are most encouraging.

" Aylmer was making arrangements last night to cross all available infantry to the right bank by steamer, leaving 3,000 on the left bank to contain the enemy in front of him with 26 guns and bulk of cavalry brigade. Thus 6,000 infantry and 20 guns will be on the right bank."

This explained the move of the Turkish division reported on 26th January, as moving east by the right bank. I felt grateful to Sir Percy Lake for his kind message, and I thanked him, telling him he could rely on us.

CHAPTER XV

THE DEFENCE OF KUT—SECOND PHASE

At the end of January began what I call the second phase of the siege, with all the troops on half-rations. Effectives on 27th January numbered 8,356 combatants, of whom 6,430 were infantry. If I include combatants in hospital, men of the Field Ambulance and Medical establishments and the Supply and Transport Corps, the total was 10,513 men. In addition we had 2,908 native followers, which made the total mouths to feed 13,421.

The casualties of the siege up to 28th January were 2,240.

As regards S.A. ammunition I had 756 rounds per rifle on 28th January, for 7,100 rifles. For a statement of gun ammunition, of which I still had an adequate quantity, see Appendix to Part IV.

On 28th January we noticed that a Turkish division was taking up a position between the Dujailah Redoubt, at the extreme right flank of the enemy's Essinn position, and Mhairijah on the Hai river, marked as Atab on some maps. This was the commencement by the enemy of a series of redoubts to connect the Hai river with the Dujailah Redoubt, and so make it one with the Essinn position.

I was anxious to find out the strength of the investing troops, as my mind was given up to co-operating with Aylmer when he should advance, either by attacking the Turkish force on the left bank as it retired past Kut, or by an assault on the main camp at Shumran up river, where the enemy's steamers and stores were. I saw no use in making efforts which were not in combination with Aylmer. I suggested to G.H.Q. that the Indian chiefs in India should be asked by Government to send a message to the Rajputs, Mahrattas, Sikhs and Dogras with me—as I considered that it would encourage the men to receive a message, and so help the defence.

At the end of January the river began to fall. On the 28th and 29th it dropped four inches on each day. The inundations had practically isolated the Fort, and I had thoughts of abandoning it when the floods washed us out of our first line of defence, but I decided to hold to it, as it formed a *débouché* for a sortie eastward along the left bank, if I desired to make one in that direction.

I took extraordinary measures of vigilance and precaution

with regard to the guarding of my magazines of ammunition. I had placed them in separate buildings in the town as a precaution against the Arab inhabitants, instigated by the Turks, whose spies got in and out of Kut with ease, by swimming the river at night. And I took similar precautions with the supplies. Major Cotton was placed in charge of the fire brigade, and I instituted an organised system among the civil population for putting out fires.

On 3rd February, I received a telegram from the Viceroy of India, forwarded by General Headquarters from Basra :—

" Following gracious message has been received from H.E. the Viceroy. Begins :—

" ' Please transmit following message from me to General Townshend.

" " The bravery and endurance with which you and the troops under your command have resisted the attacks of the enemy have excited admiration of all, and I am confident resistance will be maintained until help reaches you in the near future. India thinks of you and your troops all the time." ' "

This message from the Viceroy I published to the troops.

On 5th February a telegram from G.H.Q. informed me of the contemplated dispatch of the 13th British Division to Mesopotamia. From its number I knew it must be one of the newly raised " Kitchener's Army " divisions, and I had read in one of the back numbers of " The Times," dropped into Kut by aeroplane, that it had suffered very severely in the Gallipoli peninsula, where it had some 4,000 casualties in one action. It was not likely, I thought, that it would be at full strength. G.H.Q. said it was not clear if this division was intended to be in addition to or in lieu of the three brigades (i.e., one division) promised from India, but the Army Commander had strongly urged that it should be in addition. No dates, I observed, were mentioned for the arrival of these reinforcements, though the Army Commander had urged immediate dispatch.

Scurvy now made its appearance amongst the Indian troops. Colonel Hehir, the A.D.M.S., had long expected it, for the Indians, with the exception of the Gurkhas, would not eat horseflesh. All vegetables had given out, but I had ordered seed to be planted in the gardens on the northern front of the town to supply the needs of the hospital in this respect.

I have mentioned before that the enemy had completely and thoroughly invested us with innumerable trenches, redoubts, barbed wire entanglement, etc., on the north, north-east, and north-west fronts. They were now busy digging redoubts and trenches on the right bank of the Tigris east of

Kut, evidently to prevent our co-operation with Aylmer's approach on the right bank, for his move of the bulk of his troops to that bank was the cause of the enemy's activity on it. In addition to the Turkish division which was working on the section from the Dujailah Redoubt to the Hai River, along "Turks Ridge," another large column, estimated at a brigade of infantry and a field battery, was discerned on the morning of 6th February, moving from the Hai bridge towards Essinn. I thought it must be part of the division I had reported on 26th January, which was to dig itself in along "Turks Ridge," to resist a possible turning manœuvre by the British operating on the right bank.

I received about this date a "Times Weekly Edition" of 10th December, dropped by aeroplane with a few other papers. They all had accounts of the battle of Ctesiphon and the retreat to Kut.

On 6th February, General Aylmer wired me his plan for relieving us. It was as follows :—

As soon as sufficient reinforcements arrived—about the middle of February—his present intention was to advance up the right bank of the Tigris by a night march with his principal mass, leaving enough troops to contain the Turks in the Hannah position. Probable numbers of his Principal Mass would be 12,000 bayonets, besides strong artillery and cavalry brigades. He would endeavour to defeat the Turks in the Essinn position or wherever found. His available land transport only permitted him to carry one day's food, besides what was carried on the man.* Whatever happened, my co-operation to the fullest possible extent was essential, but the way in which it would be best ensured must depend on the developments of the next ten days. Alternative methods should at once receive my most careful consideration.

Case A. If his success was not sufficiently pronounced, he intended to follow the enemy across the Hai and endeavour to defeat him again wherever he stood, making for his ships and bridge. He referred to my telegram of 5th February, in which I stated that the enemy was now throwing up investing works on the right bank east of Kut, rendering it impossible for me to cross until Aylmer's advance had removed the blockade. I could then cross my maximum available force, with such guns and machine-guns as I could get over quickly, to assist him in further operations, as suggested in Case A.

Case B. In case Aylmer succeeded in driving the Turks across the Hai, it was quite possible that even with my resistance he might not be able to get any further. Then he would hold the enemy back whilst I deliberately crossed the Kut

* The transport question was crippling him just as it had crippled me in the Ctesiphon operations.

garrison to the right bank, including sick and wounded, who would be transported back to his present position. The Army Commander had sanctioned Aylmer in requiring me to do this, if, in his opinion, the circumstances necessitated it.

In Case A, in which a temporary weakened garrison would be left at Kut, I might have to construct inner entrenchments in the event of my first line being forced by greatly superior numbers. In Case "B," several such entrenchments would be absolutely essential, even with Aylmer's resistance by enfilade fire, to enable me to extricate the garrison, as the enemy would be certain to press the attack on the north front directly my withdrawal was pronounced.

Many other arrangements would naturally occur to me; I should at once put all such arrangements in hand.

In Case "A," during Aylmer's attack and before I was able to cross, I could assist him by artillery fire on the enemy's flank if the enemy moved within the zone of effective fire, either in the retreat or in attempting to send forward reinforcements. I must make arrangements for this.

It would also be essential for Aylmer to obtain rations at Kut in either of the cases, and I must be prepared to cross these rations to the right bank directly I could get across. I must let him know very soon what I could give him in this way. I must consider the possibility of crossing such supplies beforehand to the Liquorice Factory, which would suit for Case "A" and possibly for Case "B" if we included it in the line we could hold.

"As regards bridges," Aylmer said, "it is impossible for us to bring up by land with us in the first instance the material you require for a boat-bridge over the Tigris. So it is thus out of the question. We have wire cables and two runners suitable for flying-bridges over the Tigris or lesser width.

"Have you also got any? Can you construct two or possibly more rafts with superstructure for flying-bridges and prepare material for landing-stages. You could possibly erect two on left bank and one on right bank at Liquorice Factory in anticipation.

"Each raft might be made out of two small mahelas.

"In Case "A" we shall endeavour to take a very light trestle bridge for the Hai, suitable for infantry in single file and as many Wheatley bags, waterproof sheets, and tarpaulins as possible for crossing in rafts. Except these we shall depend on fords or being able to seize enemy's bridge at Mhairijah. As these means are somewhat sketchy and uncertain, could you possibly get enough material, in addition to rafts and landing stages, to construct a bridge over the Hai near Kut, after we join hands? Material of otherwise unserviceable mahelas might possibly be used for this. Without previous bridge over Hai near Kut, in Case "A," the two or more (if you have material)

flying bridges would assist transfer of men and supplies from one bank to another. Your advice is required as to where they should be established. If you cannot possibly make a bridge over the Hai, one of the flying-bridges might be made across it.

"In Case "B" the flying-bridges will be essential for transfer of garrison and guns. In Case "A," if Turkish force now there will not move from the Hannah position, it is possible the enemy may transfer so many of his troops from Shumran to the right bank against us that action on your part with maximum available troops may be advisable on the left bank so as to fall on his camps and ships at Shumran, instead of joining us in our advance beyond the Hai on the right bank. It is also possible that in other eventualities action on your part on the left bank may be necessary, with or without our direct co-operation.

"You should prefer a scheme for this also."

I replied on the next morning, 7th February, as follows :—

"Para. 1. I shall of course endeavour to co-operate with my maximum strength on whichever bank my action is directed. On principle my maximum force would be three weak brigades, one other being left as minimum force to hold Kut defences with the bulk of the artillery.

"Our artillery in their present positions in our defences can co-operate with your advance on the right bank, and its fire-sweep, to assist your approach towards the Hai, south of the town, will be improved.

"Para. 2. I have already another line of defence behind the one I occupy now, and the defences of the outer walls of the town will be improved. Floods compelled me to abandon my first line of defence on the north-west section.

"Para. 3. You will observe by my former telegrams that I do not consider it possible to cross the Tigris to the right bank, i.e., to that portion of it east of the Hai. The enemy has placed more troops there and is digging in hard. The operation could not be carried out at night without detection and it would probably be a disaster. When you arrive opposite Kut I could then start crossing the river.

"Para. 4. I should assist your passage of the Hai by action from the Liquorice village on the west bank of the Hai ; in order to do this I should reinforce the present garrison of the Liquorice village by night, by means of the ferry* up to two brigades and should of course co-operate with your advance along the right bank towards the Turkish camp.

"Para. 5. I note your instructions *re* the sick and wounded

* The *Sumana*, with a barge attached, was the ferry which crossed to the Liquorice village and returned under cover of darkness for the purpose of relieving the garrison there, conveying rations, wounded, etc. This ferry could gradually put two brigades in the Liquorice village.

and supplies to be placed on the east bank of the Hai, since the Liquorice village is on the west bank of that river, i.e., the side nearest the enemy and well within range of his guns. See my telegram of 22nd December *re* the time taken to cross troops, sick, wounded, supplies, etc., but rafts will of course accelerate matters.*

"Para. 6. I am going into the matter of rafts and landing stages.

"Para. 7. I have already considered the project of attacking the Turkish camp on left bank (at Shumran) should that be necessary, and to this end I have had ramps made for crossing trenches.

"Para. 8. It all depends whether your success is a pronounced one or not. If you soundly beat or destroy the force against you on the right bank there will be a general Turkish retreat. You can turn him on the right bank, and to deal with a turning movement he would have to quit his entrenchments; and then the Turk is no use.

"But 12,000 rifles seems a small maximum force out of 20,000. Surely one brigade entrenched on the left bank is ample to hold the Turkish force at Hannah in respect. If you have any doubt as to the result, would it not be wiser to wait and unite all your forces before advancing, particularly with regard to the 13th British Division? If this effort fails it will be a grave affair. I remember your remarks *re* state of Indian troops with you after two indecisive actions and a severe reverse. Moreover, if you relieve us with large forces there will be no need to think of leaving Kut.

"I do not think the Turks can possibly take Kut as long as you are face to face with them down river, and, if the Russians are seriously menacing Baghdad, and are successful Erzroum way, I do not see how any more reinforcements can be sent down the Tigris from Baghdad. However, you are the best judge.

"Please do not mind my offering suggestions without being asked for them. Our position here is a serious one, and I am anxious you should not fail again. You can imagine how anxious I am; I have had a continual strain on me. Since I advanced from Amarah in September last, the whole of the operations have been on my shoulders, and you know how ill

* It was impossible for us to establish a bridge over the Tigris, owing to want of roadway planks. Wood-work and piles would not hold in the swift current and mud that formed the bed of the river. The current was a four or five knot one, and the Tigris some 500 yards broad. All work would have to be done under the enemy's artillery fire, which would become active and violent both by night and day at the first sign of the bridge being made. The enemy's investing trenches, manned by their troops, were one to two hundred yards from the Liquorice village, and attained the river banks of the village up stream of it. They had trenches at the mouth of the Hai down stream of the village; and their trenches ran all along the right bank of the river from the mouth of the Hai eastward, down stream. Thus it will be seen in no way could secrecy be ensured. A constant exchange of rifle fire went on all day between the snipers of both sides, and the passage of the *Sumana* ferry at night was always greeted by a heavy fusillade.

I was when I left Simla to conduct the advance on Kut-al-Amara.

"But I am quite well and cheery, and no matter how desirous we are of being relieved, it is better that you should make certain of doing it."

A wire from G.H.Q. on 7th February, addressed to Corps Commander, and repeated to me, showed me that Aylmer was apparently not going to await the arrival of a brigade of field artillery, on its way up to reinforce him, since bad weather might postpone its arrival; also that the 13th British Division from Egypt would not begin to arrive at Basra till the end of February, and no considerable portion of it could reach Aylmer by 15th March, even if the additional river-craft, due in Mesopotamia by the end of February, admitted of its transport and maintenance. G.H.Q. also estimated that a fresh (sixth) Turkish division might reach Baghdad about 22nd February, and a seventh was due about 12th March. I well knew that the Turkish reinforcements arrived in much quicker time than our Intelligence calculated.

In the Appendix to Part IV, I insert leaves from my own operation order book to show the different plans I drew up for co-operation with the Relief Force in their next attempt to relieve Kut. My custom is to write down my operation orders briefly in my own book. It is then taken by my General Staff, worked into regular operation orders, and then returned to me. I carry out the same procedure in action or on the march—that is, I indicate my tactical decisions briefly in writing, and my General Staff promptly issue them in the shape of operation orders. When time does not admit of writing, I dictate the orders necessary.

On 7th February, I was informed that the 13th British Division would embark in Egypt on the 10th and was expected at Basra about 2nd March. I wired to Sir Percy Lake to ask the Commander-in-Chief in India to consider my name for command of this new corps (the 13th British Division, plus the three brigades coming from India), as Sir John Nixon had recommended me for command of a corps when he left Mesopotamia, and I was the next senior to Aylmer in that country.

About this time it was reported to me by the G.O.C., 30th Brigade that the Afridis of the 24th Punjabi Infantry were deterring the other Mahomedan troops from eating horseflesh, which in order to combat scurvy it was so necessary for them to eat. How much I regretted that these trans-Border men had been employed in Mesopotamia, how much worry did I suffer on the account of these—in my opinion—greatly over-rated troops! As regards fighting, I found this class of Indian soldier distinctly mediocre. They were not nearly so good against modern artillery fire as the hitherto despised Bombay

native infantry, who showed brilliant qualities in this campaign. I asked General Aylmer to bring these facts strongly before the notice of Army Headquarters, India, repeating my telegram to General Headquarters. General Aylmer entirely endorsed my opinions on this class of troops, and asked if the trans-Border Pathans could not be all returned to India or sent to East Africa. I also recommended that the Moulvi of Delhi should be asked to send a message advising the Mohamedan soldiers with me to eat horseflesh in the siege, and I suggested also that the Sikh, Dogra and Rajput authorities should send a similar message.

The time was drawing near for Aylmer's second attempt to relieve Kut. He hoped that the enemy would not be in excessive strength at Essinn, and he had decided to await the arrival of the 13th Brigade, R.F.A., portions of the brigade ammunition column, and 1,450 British infantry details. A similar push, on a larger scale, with a turning move when big reinforcements arrived, he thought was prohibited by the question of the land transport necessary for such a movement, unless our big reinforcements were bringing a large amount of transport, which would doubtless delay their arrival. He referred to the information from G.H.Q., that there was a possibility of large reinforcements reaching the enemy before he could start his push to relieve Kut, and, should the chances of success become indifferent, it must be dropped.

He considered that the only course open to the Relief Force, if this push failed, was to continue the attack on the Turkish entrenchments at Hannah, on the left bank, from all possible directions, and to assault it as soon as the 13th British Division arrived. In other words, if the turning movement failed to relieve Kut, the frontal attack would be adopted. The subsequent operations would be up both banks and close to the river, so that the 13th Division, and in great measure the Indian division, should not be delayed by the question of land transport. He asked for a second bridge, which should be transportable by land, and as many steamers, barges and mahelas as possible.

I was now busy on a dyke to protect the town from the floods when they should arrive, and the enemy was trying to upset my Arab working parties by opening heavy bursts of artillery and musketry fire at night. I must say that the effect on the Arabs was considerable, but the work progressed nevertheless.

There would be a difficulty, I found, in feeding Aylmer's force when it arrived. Our mill ground barely enough flour for the daily consumption of my garrison at Kut, and it was uncertain whether it would hold out. On the other hand, if Aylmer's whole force advanced methodically it would bring its own food with it.

On 12th February telegrams from G.H.Q. to Corps Commander were repeated to me, which altered my ideas regarding the advantage of waiting for the arrival of the 13th British Division and the expected Indian Division before Aylmer made his effort to relieve Kut.

(*a*) G.H.Q. warned Aylmer that it was not safe for him to assume that either the 13th Division or the new Indian Division would be able to reach him in time to take part in any operations designed for my relief.

(*b*) The arrivals of additional river-craft, G.H.Q. pointed out, were not keeping up to forecast, and it was extremely doubtful if either division, complete, could be transported to Aylmer before the end of March at the earliest. Infantry units with minimum transport would be pushed up as soon as possible.

(*c*) The date of the arrival of the 13th Brigade, R.F.A., and portions of the brigade ammunition column, were to be wired later, but its transport by water would involve some delay in the despatch of Indian details.

G.H.Q. also gave reasons for and against Aylmer's postponement of his advance. Under the heading "In Favour of Postponement," it was stated that:

(*d*) Aylmer would be reinforced by 18 guns and 450 British Infantry, who were doing escort to the guns on the march.

(*e*) There were 3,500 Indian details at Basra to join battalions in Aylmer's force and fill up gaps, and over 2,000 Indian details, mostly for units in Aylmer's force, were expected at Basra, about 18th February; 1,000 British infantry details for units in Aylmer's force and 500 horse and field artillery details were due from England about 14th February. A large proportion of the above could be sent up by 25th February, and though there might not be time to incorporate all into their units, they would be available for bridge-head guards, and to prepare and occupy a second defensive position at Wadi or Sheikh Saad.

(*f*) The leading units of the 13th Division should be arriving at Basra between the 25th and the end of the month. They would be pushed up to Amarah in support.

(*g*) It was pointed out that postponement would give rather more time to arrange for Russian pressure to be exerted towards Kirmanshah, though "there is no reason to anticipate anything very effective in this direction at present."

As arguments "Against Postponement" G.H.Q. put forward:—

(*h*) Enemy's possible reinforcements. According to latest information it appeared that, in addition to the 35th, 45th, 51st, 52nd and 2nd Divisions already arrived, a sixth division

with 24 guns might arrive at Kut by the middle of February and a seventh with 12 guns by the end of February.

(*i*) Additional time would be given to the enemy to still further strengthen his defences, particularly on the right bank, should Aylmer's main concentration on that bank become known to the enemy in advance.

(*j*) It might also give time to the enemy to improve his means of communication across the Tigris below Kut, and across the Hai. G.H.Q. added that the Army Commander did not wish to sway Aylmer's decision either way, as he felt that Aylmer, being on the spot, was best able to weigh the pros and cons.

I did not at all like the idea that neither the British Division nor the new Indian one could be counted on to arrive in time for any operation for the relief of Kut. All who were under my command had one hope—to hear of the arrival of all-British troops, for the Indian troops cannot be compared with the British, even when those British were soldiers hastily raised and improvised under the name of "Kitchener's Army."

As regards (*e*) I knew that the value of the Indian details would not amount to much, if they were of the same stamp as those who filled up my gaps after the battle of Kut-al-Amara. Nor did I like the idea of troops being installed in "a second defensive position at Wadi or Sheikh Saad." That smelt of a violation of Economy of Force, for to place a tactical reserve twenty miles behind the battle amounts to nothing else. Every man was wanted to win the battle on the right bank. Of course, if some of these details were to be used to contain the Turks in the Hannah position on the left bank, it was another matter. I had very little hope in paragraph (*g*). The Russians were wandering about Persia like "a camel without a nose string," as the Afghan would say. Small columns were occupying towns for political reasons. There was no sign of a Russian Principal Mass being directed on Baghdad.

As regards paragraph (*j*), the Turks were evidently aware of Aylmer's project, as they were strengthening the Essinn position and connecting the Hai and the Dujailah Redoubt with a chain of entrenchments and redoubts. This paragraph was being carried out by them also.

The approaching floods would greatly affect the situation. Already G.H.Q. were putting all available Indian details on to making an above-flood-level road from Kurna to Amarah ; the politicals had impressed all possible Arab labour for this work ; and G.H.Q. were asking Aylmer if he could spare sappers and miners to bridge breaches, and were asking him for suggestions for keeping it open from Amarah to Wadi throughout March.

The Army Commander agreed with Aylmer that, unless he got a favourable opportunity for his push on the right bank, "the only alternative is to await maximum reinforcements

that can arrive within Townshend's limit of holding out." Where now was my promised relief within two months? Our reinforcements always seemed to arrive too late, while the Turkish ones arrived to time. That which I feared when I first arrived at Kut and asked for relief in a month, as otherwise it would not be possible to extricate me, appeared likely to come true. I was now very anxious, though none of my staff or my command had the slightest idea of it, and the result was that I telegraphed to G.H.Q., repeating it to Aylmer:

"If the relief of Kut is to be carried out, it must be done as soon as possible by as strong a force as possible."

I pointed out to Aylmer in another wire that I believed that the desert route from Sheikh Saad to Kut was always open, even in flood time. I thought it was the best one to take, as he could do it in one march, and the Turks at Essinn would have to leave their trenches to oppose him; thus they should be easily beaten by him. Finally, the same amount of land transport would do as by the route he proposed to take. I added that the Turks were now throwing up entrenchments along the west bank of the Hai, from the point where it falls into the Tigris, at three or four hundred yards' distance from the river bank. At present these entrenchments only extended about half a mile along the Hai. I told him that the Turks seemed to anticipate everything we arranged, although they could not have our present cypher. But it was understandable that Turkish spies went in and out of Kut amongst the Arab population as they pleased. It was only a case of swimming the river in a *mussak* on a dark night. And no doubt there were a lot of spies or so-called friendly Arabs with Aylmer's force.

On 13th February also I wired to General Headquarters, confessing that I was very anxious about the news of the impending arrival of two new Turkish divisions and 36 guns. It had altered my views in regard to Aylmer waiting for reinforcements from England and India, for I was of the opinion that if two more divisions installed themselves it would not be possible for me to be extricated. I thought that Aylmer should come as soon as possible with a good maximum force, not under 14,000 rifles, with the extra field artillery brigade mentioned. If he took the route from Sheikh Saad to Kut (25 miles), I thought he would beat the Turks well, for they had no entrenchments on that road, and are no use out of them. It would be most regrettable to have to evacuate Kut, but it would be better than having my force taken, for it would have as bad an effect as the fall of Cornwallis at York Town. The authority of the information as to the arrival of the two new Turkish divisions was the British Military Attaché with the Russians. He would only get such news as the Russian General chose to give him, and the latter might be misinformed,

just as our General Headquarters were, before my advance on Ctesiphon, in regard to the strength of the enemy.

A telegram was received on 13th February from the Chief of the General Staff, Delhi, about the eating of horseflesh by Indian soldiers. "Please inform Townshend that he can quote the Imam Jumma Musjid, Delhi, as saying there is no objection to Musulmans eating horse in stress of war provided it is 'halaled."* Leading Pandit, Delhi, says there is no objection to Hindus eating horse. Both authorities are willing to give written statements to this effect. We will get you similar authority from leading Granthis as soon as possible."

The enemy's aeroplanes now began to be active—as will be noticed in the following extracts from my diary:—

"13th February. A German monoplane came over the town and dropped five bombs in the morning and ten more in the evening on the two trips he made. Several of them fell close to my Headquarters.

I asked the Corps Commander to let his aeroplanes bomb the Turkish main camp and hangar in retaliation.

The enemy again opened fire on the town at 9.30 p.m., with his guns, and there was a sharp burst of musketry in front of the Woolpress Village and our north-west section. Our casualties, however, were only ten on this date.

14th February. The German monoplane flew over Kut at 5.30 p.m. and dropped five bombs without result.

At 9.30 p.m. the enemy's guns fired thirty to forty shells into the town, resulting in fourteen casualties to us."

On 15th February, the enemy's guns, including a newly arrived quick-firer battery, opened on the town and fort at 5.45 p.m. and were at once engaged by ours, but "we are absolutely outgunned by the enemy, and there is no doubt of it. Our 5-inch guns are utterly out of date and their rate of fire painfully slow, the enemy's 12-centimetre guns getting off rounds three times as quickly. So slow are our heavy guns here—about one round in ten minutes—that I generally see no use in firing them. My experience of them in the four operations I have conducted out here is a fairly wide one, and I will never take these useless guns anywhere I may command in future. They are only fit for the scrap heap." (Quotation from my diary).

Our machine guns, installed on the roofs of the houses, soon had the effect of making the German aeroplane fly high over Kut.

On 16th February the following message from the King-Emperor to me, transmitted through General Sir Percy Lake, was communicated in a Special Order to all ranks.

* The Mohamedan "halali," that is, cuts the throat of, any animal or bird before he eats it or prepares it for food.

"I, together with all your fellow-countrymen, continue to follow with admiration the gallant fighting of the troops under your command against great odds. Every possible effort is being made to support your splendid resistance."

My answer to the Secretary of State ran as follows :—

"It is hard for me to express by words how profoundly touched and inspirited all ranks of my command have been by His Majesty's message.

"On behalf of my command—that is to say, Royal Naval Detachment, the Sixth (Poona) Division, all ranks of the British and Indian Units composing it, and of the troops attached, including Territorials—I hope you will convey to His Majesty that the knowledge that we have gained the praise of our beloved Sovereign and our fellow-countrymen will be our sheet-anchor in this defence."

On 16th February, with reference to questions of replacing inefficient troops in the Relief Force, I suggested to Sir Percy Lake that a leaf might with advantage be taken out of Napoleon's Correspondence in the matter of posts in the line of communications, which might well be held by convalescents, instead of using trained troops for this purpose. In my advance on Kut-al-Amara in September, 1915, I had garrisoned posts with convalescents. Thus, in the post at Sannaiyat, convalescents, commanded by a convalescent officer, held in respect 2,000 mounted Arabs with two Turkish guns, who menaced them during the time that I was fighting the battle.

On 17th February I received the following wireless message *viâ* Basra, from General Baratoff, at Kasvin: "General Townshend. *Je suis heureux de partager avec vaillant corps d'armée Anglaise à Mésopotamie la joie de la prise de Erzroum par notre armée.*"*

To this I immediately sent the following reply :—

"General Baratoff, Kasvin. *Remerciements pour votre dépêche. Sommes tous enchantés de la prise de Erzroum qui joue rôle stratégique et politique de la plus haute importance dans l'empire Ottomane. Félicitations de ma part et de mes camarades ici aux braves Russes.*"†

In the latter half of February, the enemy, who had been reinforced up to some 30,000 men, still held the Hannah position on the left bank in force, about 10,000 men being entrenched there. Further in rear of Hannah (i.e., up river towards Kut) were other defensive lines at Felahiyeh, Sannaiyat, Nakhailat, and along the northern part of the Essinn position.

* "I am happy to share with the gallant English army corps in Mesopotamia the joy of the capture of Erzroum by our army."

† "Thanks for your message. We are all delighted by the capture of Erzroum, which plays a part of the highest political and strategical importance in the Turkish Empire. Congratulations from myself and my comrades here to the brave Russians."

All these positions, except that of Essinn, which dated from my battle in September, 1915, had been constructed since Aylmer's first repulse in the battle of Hannah, on 21st January by direction of Von der Goltz and his German staff. All were protected on either flank by the Tigris and the Suwaika marsh. On the right bank, on which Aylmer had decided to make his push to relieve us at Kut, the Essinn position constituted the Turkish main line of resistance, with an advanced position at Beit Aiessa, a ruined mud hut on the right bank. The right flank of the Essinn position was supported by the Dujailah Redoubt, about five miles south of the Tigris.

Aylmer had decided to attack the Turkish right flank at the Dujailah Redoubt before the arrival of the flood season, expected about the middle of March. It was feared that as soon as the Tigris came down in flood, the Turks would cut the " bunds " or dykes, and thus flood the country, rendering further offensive operations impracticable. The whole area was so flat that hardly any portion of it could safely be said to be above flood-level.

General Aylmer decided not to wait for further reinforcements, but to advance with the maximum force available—five brigades, for which land transport carrying two days' food and water could be made available. He intended to use two more brigades, practically without transport, as a minimum force to demonstrate along the right bank against the front of the Essinn position, and thus minimise the danger of a counter-stroke. He said that before delivering his push he must have several sunny days to dry up the country after the heavy rain so that the columns of transport might be able to move across this country by night.

If he could see a prospect of getting two more brigades within a reasonable time, he said that he might decide to await their arrival, which was, however, problematical. He said it was clear that the bulk of the two divisions from Egypt and India could not arrive before high Tigris, although individual units might do so. Therefore, he must conclude that the two divisions must be regarded as not available for the relief of Kut.

This was all most unfortunate, and the arrival of the troops in packets, instead of the advance of a united army corps, was a clear violation of the principle of Economy of Force.

Much of the unfortunate situation was due to the first repulse of the Relief Force in its attack on the Hannah position, on 21st January, when the enemy were only lightly entrenched and Aylmer's force was in superior numbers with plenty of ground to manœuvre over. Now we were all paying for this defeat. I find the following comment in my diary on 18th February :—

" It seems to me that I had better kill a lot more horses and

save barley, for it will be long before we are relieved. Probably the floods—possibly the fall of Erzroum—may relieve us.

"19th February. Last night was very quiet." As a rule there was continuous rifle-fire during the night, especially between our garrison of the Liquorice village on the right bank and the enemy's entrenchments, which were in places within fifty or sixty yards of the entrenched village. The garrison was very much on the alert, as it was understood that the Turks might attempt any night to rush the village. This they endeavoured to do several times, but, though all their trenches were full of men and a terrific fusillade was kept up, they could not get their men to advance across the one hundred yards of open ground.

Brigadier-General Hamilton, commanding the 18th Infantry Brigade, was wounded slightly on this day by a sniper. Luckily he was soon able to resume duty.

The German monoplane made two trips over Kut town in the afternoon, dropping bombs on each occasion and killing two or three Arabs.

On 20th February, about 7 a.m., heavy gun-fire was heard to the eastward, and shells could be clearly seen bursting in the air.

I kept my troops all day in readiness to take the offensive if opportunity offered, but the Turks made no movement, except that a small column of about 500 infantry proceeded from the camp south-west of Rumeli, on the left bank, towards Horse Shoe Marsh. About 8 p.m., the enemy fired very heavily on the Woolpress village for three-quarters of an hour, from their trenches to the west of it, but no attempt was made to press home the attack.

On 25th February I received a telegram from General Baratoff, at Hamadan, *viâ* Basra, saying that, in order to shorten the distance between us, he was moving with his expeditionary corps on Kirmanshah. On 9th February, his troops occupied the Bidesourka passes, which proved strongly fortified by the Turks, who had German officers. Baratoff had also occupied Sinneh, and his cavalry were in pursuit of the enemy, who were in retreat on Kirmanshah. He had captured five guns and all kinds of war material, including telegraph wire and hand-grenades. He evidently thought that I was in command of the British Expeditionary Force in Mesopotamia, so I wired his message on to Sir Percy Lake, asking him to put Baratoff right in this matter.

I had suggested to Sir Percy Lake, on 20th February, that the Russians be asked to move a detachment from the region of Lake Van, which we knew was now in their occupation, to occupy Jezire, on the Turkish main line of communications, north of Mosul. This would have a great effect, as it would utterly disorganise the Turkish line of communications to the

Tigris, and possibly force them to shift the line of communications to the difficult Euphrates valley, not to mention greatly more far-reaching effects upon their hold on Mesopotamia. Great results would be possible from such a strategic turning movement against their main line of communications ; and we should be most effectively helped in the attainment of our objective.

About 20th February, General Aylmer computed the strength of the Turks around and down stream of Kut as follows :—

At Hannah	7,000 to 10,000	Infantry.
,, Essinn	8,000	,,
,, Kut	8,000	,,

The arrival of a new division, he estimated, would bring them up to 32,000 men. He was sure that the Turks had anticipated his advance by the right bank, as they had strongly entrenched a line from Sinn Abtar Redoubt—3 miles due south on the Tigris—echelonned back for two miles to a strong redoubt which they were digging on a mound. The Turks had also constructed a bridge-head on the north side of the Hai, at the point where their bridge crossed that river.

I thought that on whichever bank Aylmer beat them, the Turks on the opposite one would run also. In support of this theory I gave the example of my battle in September, 1915.

Before making his push by the right bank, Aylmer evidently thought he would have another try at the Turkish position at Hannah on the left bank. I can understand his wish to do so. A successful assault on this position at early dawn meant the Turks in headlong rout towards Kut with Aylmer on their heels and me sallying out to attack the retreating enemy as they passed. If only that attack of Aylmer's on 21st January had succeeded, the result would have been a splendid victory, for the Turks would have had no heart left, and my force still had plenty of fight in it.

On 21st February, when returning from a visit to the second-line entrenchments, I met a messenger with a wire from Aylmer, to say that he had made arrangements to carry out at dawn on 22nd February a surprise operation on the Hannah position, the objective of which was to inflict the maximum amount of damage to the enemy in his main camp behind the position, by bringing enfilade, frontal and reverse fire to bear on it with every available gun. Practically the whole force, he said, would take part in the operation, and he anticipated some success. " It is possible that the enemy may be induced to vacate his position, in which case I shall follow him up." He asked me to be ready to take the offensive against the Turks if they retreated or against reinforcements going eastward from Shumran.

On 21st February I received a telegram from the Military Secretary, that the War Office had agreed to the appointment of Sir Wilfred Peek as my A.D.C. This rejoiced me very much, but alas ! it was not to be. Peek joined the relief force shortly before Kut fell, and was unable to join me. At the termination of our retreat from Ctesiphon I had sent my A.D.C., Captain Bastow, of the Yorkshire Regiment, who had been with me throughout the campaign up to the siege of Kut, for a trip to India, so that he might throw off an attack of dysentery. Thus Bastow, who served me well and is a gallant and good officer, luckily escaped the siege and our subsequent fate.

The result of Aylmer's attempt is described in my diary as follows :—

" 22nd February. Heavy gun-fire about 7 a.m. to the eastward. We could clearly see the shells bursting over Hannah, and the smoke, although the distance must be fully twenty miles. Apparently much confusion was caused in the enemy's main camp behind the Hannah position ; but they did not retreat. As is the Turkish custom when defending earthworks, they held on like grim death, their officers, revolver in hand, behind them, shooting if any man tried to get up and go. Aylmer wired to me that a certain amount of movement from east to west could be seen at Hannah. But nothing more came of this." Several other passages in the diary refer to the desertions, which about this period of the siege became prevalent among the Indian troops. " A Mohamedan sepoy of the 119th Infantry, who shot the jemadar adjutant of the battalion dead yesterday, was tried by Court Martial and sentenced to death. I confirmed it and ordered sentence to be carried out at the Fort at sunset to-day. Another Mohamedan sepoy of the 66th Punjab Infantry deserted last night (21st February), and also a third, of the 120th Infantry, quartered in the Liquorice village on the right bank. Two Punjabi Mohamedans of the 76th Punjabis also deserted. This all happened on the night of 21st February."

On the night of 22nd February, as soon as it was dark, a heavy attack was made by the enemy on the Liquorice village. The fusillade was so heavy as to recall to me that of the night attack by the Turks at Ctesiphon. The terrific fire was kept up for three-quarters of an hour, but evidently the Turks could not make up their minds to rush into the open and carry the village with the bayonet, and eventually the fire died out.

Aylmer conducted three more bombardments, but short ones, against the Turkish position at Hannah, but I gathered that they had no more effect than to cause the Turks to dig deeper, and with redoubled energy. A travelling Jew trader

gave intelligence to the Corps Headquarters on the same day that there had been a revolution in Constantinople on account of the murder of Prince Yusuf uz ed Din, that 100,000 troops were under orders for Baghdad, and 17,000 Germans, said to have arrived at Mosul, had been recalled to Constantinople.

On 26th February, I wired to General Headquarters, with reference to my despatches of the battle of Ctesiphon and subsequent retreat to Kut, to ask Sir Percy Lake to allow my general instructions to subordinate commanders at the battle of Ctesiphon " to remain in the report and not in the appendices, because these instructions give clearly the reasons for everything I did, and so there would be no questions afterwards. These instructions show that I acted on the accepted principles of war and that the failure to destroy the Turkish forces and occupy Baghdad was due only to the fact that I had only a division to do it with, which was no fault of mine, for I pointed out officially at Azizieh the danger and unsoundness of attempting such a task with only one division. Having pointed this out, I then did my duty in carrying out an order which had little chance of success, and which from want of numbers was one of the most difficult operations in war that I know of in modern history."

The bombardment of the Turkish camp behind the Hannah position continued, several devices being tried to induce the Turks to man their trenches or show themselves in the position, with a view to catching them with our artillery. It sounded much like the homely proverb of putting salt on the bird's tail, but I did not understand the use of it all. Guns by themselves never yet made an enemy quit an entrenched position.

I received a wire from Aylmer on 26th February, giving his final instructions as regards his attack on the Essinn position.

Six brigades were to make a night advance from his advanced position at Umm-al-Uruk on the right bank, going due south till they were due east of enemy's Sinn Aftah—Dujailah Redoubt flank. One brigade was to demonstrate from his advanced position at Uruk towards the south-west against the front of the Essinn position. Two brigades out of the six were to attack at dawn the enemy's flank, Sinn Aftah to Dujailah Redoubt. Two brigades would march round the enemy's flank to take the reserves in the rear. Two others would follow in reserve to assist them, or to take on army reserves moving up from Shumran over the Hai bridge or by any other route.

" The method of your co-operation," he said, " must depend on local conditions, as you must be the best judge ; but the following points are for your consideration : Your heavy guns to fire on hostile forces trying to cross the Hai bridge ; lighter guns to fire on any hostile troops offering good targets within your effective range, thus limiting area in which Turks can

manœuvre on the right bank; the crossing of a brigade by mahelas, if you have favourable opportunity, and then direct co-operation in battle. Sortie to north of Kut if enemy withdraws so many of his troops as to give you favourable opportunity. My attack will take place in eight or nine days."

My answer to the Corps Commander, which was repeated to General Headquarters, was sent on 29th February. I told him that I should endeavour to co-operate with two brigades and two 4-gun field batteries.* This was the largest Maximum Force I dare take out of Kut, owing to the danger of a determined assault by the Turkish containing force, leaving the two remaining brigades as the smallest possible minimum force to hold the defences of the town. I determined to begin to cross as soon as I could see General Aylmer's turning attack coming round to the south of the Dujailah Redoubt, for, if the turning attack did not materialise and General Aylmer were repulsed, my sortie force crossing, and the portion that had already crossed, would be annihilated, as there would be no means of retreat. The enemy had guns behind the trenches on the right bank opposite my only possible crossing place where the flying-bridges could work, and infantry in the trenches.

The operation of crossing the Tigris with the means at our disposal would take some eight hours to accomplish.

General Aylmer knew all the difficulties and delays of my crossing, which were so great as to make my co-operation of little practical use.

General Aylmer estimated the enemy in the Essinn position in front of him at 8,000 men only.

I pointed out that, once he had taken the Essinn position, Kut would be automatically relieved, since the enemy could not remain under the crossed long-range gun-fire of Aylmer and myself, and nothing could prevent me from advancing across the plain from Kut by the right bank, once I had crossed the river, and joining him when I wanted to.

I was much concerned at my means for crossing the river. Two flying-bridges, two or three rafts, the *Sumana*, and a barge made it a most difficult problem to cross with any rapidity. I could not begin the flying-bridge preparations till Aylmer was engaged in battle, or it would show the enemy what was intended. "If I cross at night there is no concealment in the terrain on the right bank (even if I could cross unobserved) and I should be overwhelmed on that bank before you could arrive. My engineers declare it will take three hours to fix up the flying-bridge, and a further two hours for small mahela flying-

* The 30th and a provisional brigade made up of the British battalions (Norfolks, Dorsets and Oxford L.I.). This would leave Delamain's, Hoghton's, and Hamilton's brigades, less their British units, to hold the Kut defences, and they would have all the artillery, less eight guns.

bridge. Divisional Engineer Commander says that not more than 150 men an hour could be crossed by the flying-bridges."

All I could say was that I would cross as fast as I could, as soon as Aylmer's turning force came into view. I noted all he had to say about my gun-fire and informed him I would concentrate twenty-one guns to sweep the zone south of Kut. I was not certain if our big guns could reach the enemy's mahela bridge over the Hai. I would ascertain with Barr Stroud rangefinder at once and let him know. When they first started a bridge over the Hai we opened fire on it and made them shift further south. I afterwards regretted having fired and disturbed them.

A lot of cheering was heard in the enemy's trenches at 6 p.m. on 28th February. I supposed it was the usual German fairy-tale of victory in France to soften the news of Erzroum and Kirmanshah.

On 1st March the casualties of the defence force from 4th December to 1st March amounted to 2,929.

The enemy bombarded Kut heavily in the afternoon of 1st March, with twenty-one guns. At the same time three German monoplanes cruised about over Kut and dropped about forty bombs, but though it was the heaviest bombardment we had yet undergone we suffered a loss of only nine killed and twenty-eight wounded. Our improvised anti-aircraft gun and machine-guns were of practically no use, the aeroplanes flying about over us with impunity. The troops were furious with the German aviators, as their especial aim seemed to be our hospital. This was the great covered-in bazaar marked with hospital flags on the roof.

If one of the German pilots had fallen into the hands of my troops he would have been torn to pieces. It was not fear of their bombs, for everyone treated the aeroplanes as a joke, running to cover at the last moment with shouts of laughter. But the victims were often women and children and our poor wounded in the hospital.

About this time there were persistent rumours that the Turks were about to use poison gas against us. It has always been a wonder to me that the German High Command, with their traditions of the Napoleonic wars and 1870, could have introduced this horror into manly warfare.

The use of poison gas is a cowardly barbarism worthy of Chinese pirates, from whose use of stinkpots I suppose the excellent German inventor borrowed his idea. Owing to several rumours I issued gas-respirators to the troops in the north-west and north-east sections of defence on 4th March. Stores of them had been sent up to Kut about the time I advanced from Azizieh against Baghdad. There had been persistent rumours that the Turks had been provided with this weapon, and I had to take precautions.

I received a wire from General Baratoff at Hamadan, dated 29th February. His troops had entered Kirmanshah on 12th February, and were met by the Governor, who was followed by the population. "I am perfectly convinced that we shall be able very soon to meet and shake hands in Mesopotamia." I sent a reply in French thanking him for his telegram, which I had announced to my troops in an *ordre du jour*. I too hoped soon to shake hands with him in Mesopotamia.

By 5th March I had sent the whole of my despatches of the Ctesiphon operations and retreat to Kut to General Headquarters, by wireless. I added that Sir Percy Lake was doubtless aware of the unfortunate and unavoidable delay in the submission of the Ctesiphon despatches, and, on behalf of all ranks of the 6th Division and units attached, I most respectfully urged that every effort should be made to expedite the publication in the Gazette of the distribution of awards to officers. I said that there was, and had been throughout the operations, a belief that we had suffered professionally in comparison with our comrades in the European theatres of war, who in many instances were being promoted over our heads, simply because the despatches of their operations were promptly published and promptly rewarded. I knew that in my own case several Major-Generals junior to me in the army had been promoted to Lieutenant-General over my head, although these officers had not had an independent command nor such great responsibilities as I had; and the same applied to the Generals commanding brigades in my command. Much more so then was this the case with regard to the field officers of units in my command. None of my Lieutenant-Colonels had been promoted to higher commands, except Colonel Climo, whom I had strongly recommended twice for promotion, giving him temporary command of a brigade in the actions of Kurna, Kut-al-Amara, and Ctesiphon, in which last battle he had been severely wounded. On the other hand, the Naval officers serving in the Flotilla in the operations under my command had been rewarded on the spot, so to speak, for the Kurna-Amarah and Kut-al-Amara operations; and I now saw in the papers that they had received rewards for Ctesiphon. Lt. Tudway, R.N., who was locked up in Kut with me at the time I made this request and whom I had recommended for the D.S.O. for his work in the boats during the retirement to Kut from Ctesiphon, had actually received his reward in the Gazette.

On the evening of 4th March, Aylmer wired me that owing to bad weather he must postpone the push for 24 hours; that the attack would now take place on the morning of 7th March. Luck seemed against us all the time. Again on 5th March, I received another wire to say that owing to weather conditions he had to postpone operations a further 24 hours! The attack would now take place on the 8th. These

delays were very unfortunate, as they gave time to the enemy to continue their construction of trenches, closing the gap between the Dujailah Redoubt and the Hai River—and the most essential thing was the taking of the Dujailah Redoubt.

Throughout the siege the weather conditions were entirely in favour of the Turks. Never had commander worse luck than General Aylmer in this respect; he had only to project an attack for driving rain and a regular gale to arise, wash away his bridge, and make the ground like a pudding, rendering it impossible for his troops to march or move the guns.

On the night of 4th-5th March, three of the mahela crews—Arabs—escaped by swimming the river. They informed the Turks of the rafts and flying bridges we were making and keeping as secret as possible. This was evident from the fact that, on the morning of 5th March, reinforcements of Turkish troops could be seen to be occupying the new entrenchments on the right bank opposite Kut town where I was going to attempt my crossing. I informed Aylmer of this, and added that I should still endeavour to cross to the right bank in order to co-operate with him in the battle, but, as he himself had said, local conditions would largely govern my actions. It was quite possible that, when the direction of his attack was discovered, an attack would be made by the investing force at Kut on the north-west or north-east front of my defences in order to contain me in the town. This attack might be a containing one to be changed into a decisive one if Aylmer's attack were repulsed. And again, the Turkish force at Hannah might be brought westward along the left bank to co-operate in an attack on Kut by the investing force.

In order to deal with circumstances as occasion demanded, I was grouping my force into three.

Two secondary forces or groups were to hold the north-western and north-eastern fronts under General Delamain (N.-W.) and General Hoghton (N.-E.). With my Central or Principal Mass (30th Brigade under General Melliss and a provisional brigade under Colonel Evans, composed of Norfolks, Oxfords, Dorsets, 22nd Punjabis and 24th Pioneers) I should take up a central position in the south-eastern outskirts of Kut town, whence, by uniting this mass with either of the two above-mentioned secondary forces, I could effectively deal with any decisive attack by the enemy on either the north-western or north-eastern avenues of approach. In this central position, I was also conveniently situated for my attempt to cross the river. I was installing the bulk of the guns south of an imaginary line drawn east and west through the Brick Kilns, so that I could concentrate artillery fire to the south-east and east; the big guns were arranged for action towards the Hai bridge, partly on the enemy's camps in rear of the Essinn ridge. At the same time the guns could be quickly shifted by taking

them through the town to positions north of it, to concentrate their fire on the north-westerly or north-easterly fronts as required.

Although all the entrenchments at Essinn and from the Dujailah Redoubt to the Hai looked and sounded formidable, they were not so in reality, for on the right bank at Essinn, from the Dujailah Redoubt to the Hai were some thirteen miles of trenches, and there were only 8,000 Turks to hold this extent of front. At least two army corps would be necessary to hold such a front under ordinary circumstances. I pointed this out to Aylmer, saying that, in reality, far from being strong, the Turks were weak everywhere in this position, and that Aylmer's attack should easily break through.* The new trenches from Dujailah to the Hai could not be formidable. The fact that they had entrenched between Dujailah and the Hai showed that the Turks did not dare to use a general reserve in the open to counter-attack Aylmer's turning attack, which was the proper way to deal with his movement.

The engineers attempted to float a mine down the Hai on the night of 6th-7th March, with the object of blowing up the enemy's bridge. But it was a failure, for it stuck at the mouth of the river on a sand-spit and blew up with an appalling explosion during the night.

From 5.30 a.m. on 8th March, I held in constant readiness the force which I intended to use in co-operation with the Corps Commander on the right bank. At 7.10 the first sound of gun-fire was heard in the direction of the Essinn Ridge and the Dujailah Redoubt.

About 8.30 there was a lull in the fire. Flocks of sheep were being driven along the right bank towards the Hai bridge, and a good deal of transport moved in the same direction from Sheikh Imam Musjid.

At 9 o'clock a haze began to rise, and by 11 observation towards Essinn became impossible, though the Hai bridge was still visible.

From 2 till 4 p.m. sounds of very heavy musketry were heard, with an occasional burst of gun-fire. About four o'clock a heavy bombardment of the Dujailah Redoubt commenced, and lasted till nearly five.

It had been apparent to me by eleven o'clock that the attack on the Dujailah Redoubt had failed, for all fire died away for some hours. The turning attack which was to have come round Dujailah to the southward never put in an appearance at all, and I came to the conclusion that Aylmer's effort against Dujailah must have absorbed all the troops he had with him in what was practically a frontal attack.

* Sir Percy Lake's dispatch giving an account of the failure of the Relief Force at Essinn clearly stated that prompt and energetic action in the attack would have carried the Dujailah Redoubt. But three hours' delay occurred to let the guns register. This gave time for Turkish reinforcements to be sent to that point.

At 12.10 p.m. I received a message from General Aylmer that the enemy were sending their reserve from Magasis to the Dujailah Redoubt, which was putting up a stubborn resistance to his attack. His aeroplanes reported that about 1,000 men were crossing from the left to the right bank at Magasis by the ferry. The enemy's reserves from Shumran were moving towards Hai, where they reported 1,500 men.

He asked what my news was, and what steps I was taking to co-operate.

I sent an answer by wireless that I should begin to cross when I saw his turning attack developing south of Dujailah, and I asked where this turning attack was and what was its progress. I informed him that we were watching Shumran carefully, and no reserves had gone to Hai bridge except about three squadrons of cavalry, while 200 infantry had gone eastward by the left bank.

At 5 o'clock I received a message from Aylmer that up to the present he had failed to take the Dujailah Redoubt, but a final effort was to be made at 5 p.m. At that time the haze began to lift, and bodies of Turkish infantry were seen moving from behind Essinn Ridge towards Magasis. A bombardment of the whole Turkish position started at 5.30, and about 5.45 a heliograph to the north-west of the Dujailah Redoubt appeared for a moment to be calling us up, but we failed to establish communication.

At 8.30 p.m. a heavy burst of artillery fire was visible at the Turkish camp at Magasis. It looked as if British shells were dropping into the camp, and the Turks' gun flashes in reply could be plainly seen.

I began to think that the attack on the Dujailah Redoubt must have been successful, though I was surprised not to hear from Aylmer.

At 11 p.m. the Corps Commander sent me the following, which I received at midnight :—

" Enemy lost heavily to-day, and it is doubtful whether they will be able to maintain their position. Will let you know to-morrow proposed plan, which will include English division, which has now arrived."

This still left me in doubt as to whether he had taken the Dujailah Redoubt or not. In fact by mentioning a " proposed plan " it would appear that he was going to prepare fresh operations. I knew, of course, that the English division could not have arrived so soon.

At 9.30 a.m. on 9th March, a telegram from the Corps Commander reached me by aeroplane :—

" To-day's operations terminated in a gallant but unsuccessful attempt to storm Dujailah Redoubt. Troops pushed home and carried out the operation with great gallantry, but the

enemy was able to mass reinforcements, which arrived from the left bank at Magasis and from Shumran, and we were unable to break through. Unless the enemy retires from his present position on the right bank, which does not seem probable, we shall be unable to maintain ourselves in present position owing to lack of water, and unless the enemy evacuates the Sinn position to-night we shall be obliged to withdraw to our previous position at Wadi. Casualties to-day have been heavy."

The above was followed by another message to say that the telegram I had received at midnight of 8th March was a bogus message which had been sent because there was a grave suspicion that the enemy had our cypher. General Aylmer said that he had been unable to break through to relieve me and that he might have to withdraw to Wadi on the morrow, but he hoped to make another attempt before long and to relieve me at an early date. The enemy had lost most severely and their repeated counter-attacks had been repulsed. This message had been written at 1.45 a.m. on 9th March, and was also despatched by aeroplane.

CHAPTER XVI

THE DEFENCE OF KUT: THIRD PHASE

I IMMEDIATELY took measures to kill off about 1,100 animals, which would save my grain and enable me to hold out till 15th April. I wired to Aylmer, saying :—

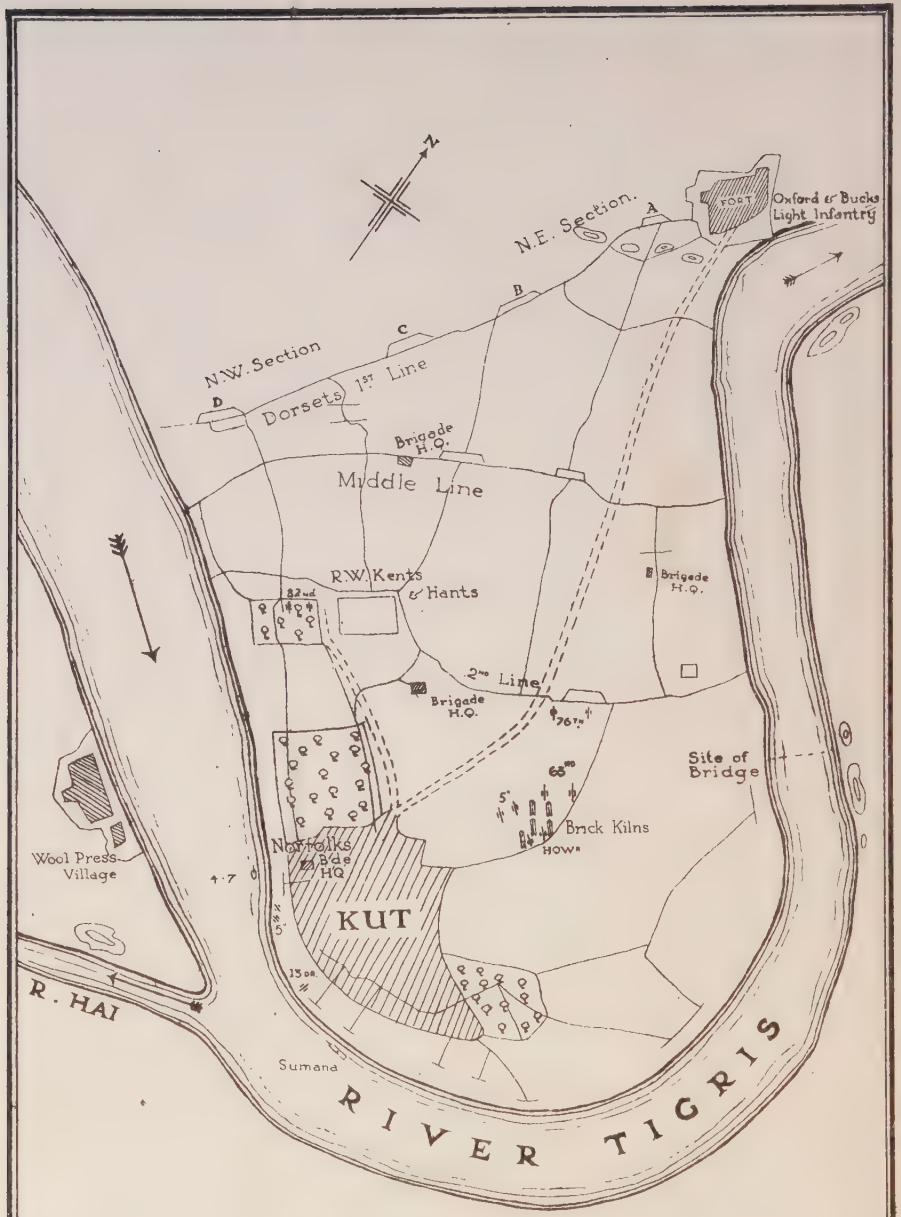
"I hope you will convey the gratitude of myself and my command and sympathy to you and your force for their gallant efforts to relieve us.

"I should like to make it clear to you again, as I told you on 8th March, that the only reserves which went east from Shumran and Essinn on the right bank were a regiment of cavalry which I saw leave Shumran myself, and watched it cross the Hai bridge, and 200 infantry along the left bank, counted by the observers at the Fort as they passed, well in sight.

"That you did not execute the projected manœuvre round the south of Dujailah with four of the six brigades, which I had to see appear before I committed my sortie force to crossing the Tigris, was due, I suppose, to your aerial reconnaissance report of the approach of reserves from Shumran. Many mistakes are made by young officers observing from aircraft up at a great height; in this country it is difficult to judge numbers, and the difference between men and cattle in the field, even by experienced officers—let alone the extra height of 4,000 feet up. Such a mistake delayed me one day during my advance on Ctesiphon, as Kemball can tell you.

"Up to 11.30 a.m. on 8th March, practically no reserves from Shumran passed the Hai on the right bank or our Fort on the left bank going east, and at that hour thick haze shrouded the whole country like a sea-fog. But had they left Shumran after 11.30 a.m., they could not possibly have reached your field of battle in time to take any part in it. I am now going to kill off animals to enable us to continue our task of holding up the Turkish advance at Kut. By killing off 1,000 animals at once and reducing British troops' loaf from 12 to 10 ozs. and Indian troops' to 10 ozs. flour meal and 4 ozs. barley for parching *per diem*, I can make my present stock of barley last till roughly 7th April.

"As I told you, however, I am entirely dependent on my mills, the stores and engines of which keep giving trouble and anxiety and require careful nursing by that able officer, Wingfield-Smith, Royal Flying Corps, who manages all this for me.



The Entrenched Camp of Kut.

"British troops will have to exist entirely on bread and horse-meat, and Indian troops on meal, parched barley and ghi, all other articles of rations will be finished, even on a reduced scale, by 15th March."

In continuation of the above :—

"Of these 1,100 animals I am killing, I may say that if put down in India now they would require six months' rest before being able to do a hard day's work. I propose keeping about 1,300 animals, of which about 900 will be required for meat up to 7th April, but those remaining alive on that day will be utterly incapable of work.

"My troops are ready to live on short rations, but they will become weak, and desertion amongst the Indian troops will increase. I hope that the next effort will be with such a maximum force as will make an absolute certainty of success. This suspense is hard to bear ; it breaks down the health and depresses. To all men and to all people uncertainty is intolerable.

"Twice now I have promised the men that relief was at hand. I ought to be relieved before 7th April, unless there is some truth in the Turkish peace proposals mentioned in Reuter's, in which case our relief may possibly settle itself in this way. Perhaps Baratoff may be induced to press his advance on Khanikin and seriously menace Baghdad, by which he would relieve me automatically. I suppose that he has difficulty in the way of transport ; still, he should be called on to help."

On 9th March I received a telegram from Field-Marshal Viscount French : "Watching your work with keenest interest. Best wishes." An aeroplane also dropped letters from my wife and some of my friends at home, written in January, one being from Sir James Willcocks, who, I was sorry to hear, had no longer a command in France.

On 10th March I received a telegram from Aylmer, saying that he had arrived back safely at Wadi on the evening of 9th March. The enemy did not follow him up to any extent, and he ended by saying he was sending me another wire to-morrow as regards future plans.

Also I received a telegram from Army Commander to Aylmer, repeated to me, asking for proposals which Aylmer might have to put forward for future action regarding relief of Kut. He said that the next advance ought to be made after the arrival of all three brigades of the 13th Division, and, if possible, one of its artillery brigades. Reinforcements of river-carts were arriving at Basra, and, if Aylmer returned promptly the river-craft he had, the above troops should reach him in sufficient time for further effort. All details for this should be carefully

prepared. He asked Aylmer if he preferred a brigade of 18-pounders or one of 5-inch howitzers; he mentioned that fifteen pontoons were on their way up river to him, while 48 pontoons and 35 pontoon wagons had arrived at Basra.

On the same date I received the following letter from Khalil Pacha, the Commander of the Turkish 6th Army, Commanding Turkish Forces in Irak, and Governor of Baghdad: —

V.E. 10.3.1916.

Les forces anglaises qui étaient arrivées pour vous sauver furent obligées de se retirer après avoir livré le combat de Felahieh, donnant 7,000 pertes.

Après cette retraite le Général Aylmer, qui était en préparation depuis un mois et demi, hier, le jour qu'il se croyait assez fort, tenta d'offenser avec le 5me, 6me, 8me et 12me brigades d'infanterie et 1 brigade de cavalerie, par la rive droite de Tigris, comme vous l'avez vu. Mais il fut encore obligé de se retirer, en donnant 4,000 pertes, et je le suis avec des forces suffisantes.

Quant à vous, vouz avez héroïquement accompli votre devoir militaire.

Désormais je ne vois aucun moyen probable pour votre liberté: d'après vos refugiés je comprends que vous êtes sans approvisionnement et que les maladies régnent dans vos troupes.

Vous êtes libre de résister à Kut ou bien vous rendre contre mes forces, qui se multiplient de plus en plus.

Veuillez agréer, Monsieur le Général, l'assurance de nos hautes considérations.

KHALIL.

Commandant des troupes Ottomanes d'Irak,

*Gouverneur de Baghdad.**

In my answer to Khalil Pacha, I wrote that on the contrary I saw much chance of relief, and I should not consider the subject of surrender. I asked if Reuter were correct about the *émeute* of Turkish soldiers at Smyrna against German officers, and also about the riots at Constantinople over the fall of Erzroum.

* "Your Excellency,

"The English forces which came to relieve you were compelled to retreat after giving battle at Felahieh and suffering 7,000 casualties.

"After this retreat, General Aylmer, who was a month and a half in making his preparations, yesterday, when he thought he was strong enough, resumed the offensive with the 5th, 6th, 8th and 12th Brigades of infantry and one cavalry brigade on the right bank of the Tigris, as you saw. But he was again compelled to retreat, with 4,000 casualties, and I am left with adequate forces.

"For your part, you have heroically fulfilled your military duty.

"From henceforth I see no likelihood that you will be relieved. According to your deserters I believe that you are without food and that diseases are prevalent among your troops.

"You are free to continue your resistance at Kut, or to surrender to my forces, which are growing larger and larger.

"Receive, General, the assurance of our highest consideration.

"KHALIL.

"Commanding Turkish Forces in Irak,

"Governor of Baghdad"

I thanked him for his courtesy and said I was glad to find again, as I had found in my operations of Kut-al-Amara and Ctesiphon, that the Turk was always a good soldier and a gentleman.

I informed Aylmer and General Headquarters of Khalil's letter and my reply, adding that the approach of flood time for the Tigris would suggest determined efforts on the part of Khalil to take Kut, and that I was even then reinforcing the Liquorice village on the right bank with a company of Norfolks. I pointed out that the Tigris floods were expected on 16th March and therefore the effort to relieve us should be early, for I did not see how Aylmer's forces could remain where they were when the floods came. I hoped Aylmer would turn over in his mind a scheme for a grand attack with the bayonet at night on Hannah and Sannaiyat with all his forces united. The Russians had found this a most effective method against the Turks ; but I thought he required the 13th British Division to be united with him before he made this attack. *A propos* of Aylmer's suspicion that the enemy had our cypher, I said that I did not think he had, since he had been surprised by Aylmer's attack at Dujailah on 8th March.

The effect of the repulse was soon apparent among my troops. There was a general feeling of gloom and depression, and desertion amongst the Indian troops increased ; the Arabs of the town now looked upon our cause as lost. If I had not been lucky enough to find the hidden grain at Kut we should have fallen by the first week in March.

I expected that the Turks, flushed with success, would now make another determined effort to take Kut, and I reinforced the Liquorice village on the right bank with another company of Norfolks, as I thought that the next effort of the enemy might be in that direction. Four Dekkani Mohamedans of the 117th Mahrattas deserted on the night of the 9th-10th March, taking their rifles and pouch ammunition with them. I ordered Brigadier-Generals to mix Mohamedans and Hindus on all outlying picquet and outpost work and to take whatever other measures their experience of Indian troops might indicate, and I ordered a small redoubt for fifty rifles to be installed in the communication trench between B Redoubt and the Middle Line.

My report on the defence of Kut up to 10th March had now been sent by wireless in instalments to G.H.Q.

This last repulse of General Aylmer, coupled with the fact that General Headquarters had told Aylmer that he must not count on the arrival of either the 13th British Division or the new Indian one in time to take part in the operations for my relief, forced me to look facts in the face and to recognise that there was little hope of relief. It was certain that never would the relief force find again such favourable conditions as were offered them in the attack on the Dujailah Redoubt. The Tigris flood was expected on 16th March. It would

possibly stop all relief operations, and if we were not relieved by 7th April we were practically lost, as flood conditions, in addition to the obstacles of the Tigris and the investing lines, made breaking out impossible. Famine would compel my force to surrender.

Anything was better than that we should be forced to surrender. An honourable way of evacuating Kut and being allowed to join Aylmer with all my force, guns, etc., was to be found in the example of Junot at Lisbon with the British in 1808, and the Commandant of Belfort in 1871. In the former case at the convention of Cintra the British permitted Junot, with his 16,000 or 17,000 troops, to evacuate Lisbon with all the honours of war, arms, guns and baggage, and transported them to France in British ships. In the latter, after three and a half months' siege and the failure of Bourbaki's army to relieve it made it apparent that Belfort must fall, the Commandant treated with the Prussians and obtained permission to regain the French army through the Prussian lines with his arms, baggage, etc. Both these examples were very honourable negotiations, and I began to reflect on them. But in order to negotiate in this way you must have plenty of food to argue with ; you must show you can go on for a long time with your resistance. You cannot argue for terms with famine looking in at you through the door as you parley with the enemy! Hence I informed the Corps Commander and General Headquarters of my views in this direction on 10th March.

I said that my objects in defending Kut on retirement from Ctesiphon were to hold up the Turkish offensive counter-stroke at the junction of the Tigris and the Hai, so as to prevent them from capturing Amarah and Nasiriyeh or reconquering the provinces we had won, and also in order to give time to concentrate and liberty of action to our reinforcements from overseas. After a three months' defence these objects had been accomplished. The Turks now dared not attack the relief force as concentrated, and the coming floods utterly precluded any Turkish advance or attempt to regain the lost provinces.

But if the third attempt to relieve me failed, Kut was bound to fall. Would it not be advantageous, I asked the Corps Commander, if, whilst he prepared the third effort to relieve Kut, I entered into negotiations with Khalil Pacha on the grounds that I should evacuate Kut and pass through his lines with arms, guns, baggage, and pouch ammunition, evacuating my wounded, sick and baggage by steamer and barges? Such a convention would be in every way honourable, in fact I had the example of the terms granted by the Austrians to Massèna at the defence of Genoa in 1800, and the Convention of Cintra in 1808, between the French and English.

I said that such terms would not only be honourable to my force, but I saw no disadvantage to Government in evacua-

ting this battered village, not nearly the size of Douamont and other French villages captured and recaptured daily in the great Verdun battle. There was no chance now of the Turks recapturing the province of Basra, and Kut had never been proclaimed British territory. I thought that Khalil Pacha would be disposed to agree to such terms, judging from what he said in his letter, in which he expressed his opinion of the defence. If Khalil (or Von der Goltz) should reject them, I would neither make nor receive any further overtures. So long as my ammunition and food remained I would hold on. If Khalil were wise he would agree. I now had food for roughly a month, but by going on starvation rations I could hold out, I supposed, till 17th April. If there was any doubt in his mind as to the certainty of early relief, it seemed to me that this proposition might go before Government. If the Army Commander saw fit to act on the suggestion, I asked that it could go forward in my own words, for if such a subject as this were cut down and shortened, I said it might put quite a different complexion on my meaning and reasons.

"At the last moment," I said, "if he still commands a disciplined body of men, who are in good heart, a general may perhaps hope to cut his way out and join the neighbouring army in the field. In doing so, if he can carry off two-thirds of the garrison that remain to him, the operation is well worth trying. But, as I said before, when invited to break out, the difference between theory and practice in this case is that we have an impassable river on three sides of us and on the land side the terrain is flooded. In addition there is a network of deep entrenchments, galleries, and communication ways that would trouble a cat to pick its way through. Moreover, we are in Mesopotamia—an Arab country, a country in which every man's hand, and rifle, is against you. If I could get out with three hundred men only it would be great luck."

On 11th March, Sir Percy Lake sent me a personal telegram :—"I can realise to the full, and sympathise most deeply with, the disappointment which both you and your command must feel at our recent failure to relieve you. Rest assured, however, that we shall not abandon the effort, and that for the next attempt the maximum force will be employed."

This I published as a *communiqué* to the troops.

I replied in a personal telegram to the Army Commander on the same day :—"Very grateful for your telegram, which I have communicated to my command. I realise fully Aylmer's difficulties, and I sympathise with his heavy loss of brave officers and men. I know you will relieve us if it is possible, but I think it will require the whole 13th Division united and at least one of its brigades of artillery to do so, and I hope it will be a united force on one bank with no dissemination whatever.

The conduct of my British troops here is splendid, their discipline and physique unimpaired, cheery and quite patient. I cannot say the same of all the Indian troops, i.e., the Mohamedans, and some of the Hindus also."

In answer to my proposals to evacuate Kut, if any doubt existed in the mind of the Army Commander as to the possibility of relieving me, I received a telegram on 13th March from G.H.Q. that the Army Commander did not approve of the proposals, but had nevertheless forwarded them as they stood to the War Office and to the Commander-in-Chief in India. (This showed me that he had serious doubts as to the possibility of my relief, or why else forward them ?) Even if the most pessimistic view of the possibilities of my relief were taken, said G.H.Q., it did not seem probable that there would be any advantage in starting negotiations with Khalil at this juncture. For, should the next attempt of the relief force be a failure, the effect of it would undoubtedly cancel any terms that the Turks might have offered. Moreover, it was inevitable that the fact of my having asked for terms would immediately be published abroad and this would have a very bad effect. The fact that Khalil had proposed negotiations with me indicated that he was anxious to transfer troops for operations elsewhere.

I replied on the same date that there appeared to be some misapprehension. I thought I had made it clear that, if the negotiations with Khalil proved satisfactory, no other relief effort would be necessary, for I should march through the Turkish lines and unite with the Relief Force.

On 12th March, Major-General Gorringe succeeded to the command of the Tigris Corps, General Aylmer being superseded by the War Office. I received a private letter from Aylmer by aeroplane, in which he told me that he had been superseded, and how much he grieved that he had not been able to relieve me. He had had a much harder task than most people realised. "It all looks very easy, when one sits in an arm-chair at the War Office." He concluded by most generous praise of me. "I cannot tell you how much I admire the splendid way in which you are defending Kut. I heartily pray that you will gain your reward in speedy relief. Give my best wishes to Delamain, Melliss, and Hamilton. Good-bye, and God bless you all, and may you be more fortunate than myself."

Throughout his life in the army, Aylmer always proved himself brave, loyal, just, and a good commander. He had very bad luck in this enterprise, owing chiefly to the weather conditions, which proved an insurmountable obstacle. Had he had decent weather at the beginning, he must have won a complete victory at Wadi, which would automatically have relieved Kut.

I deeply sympathised with Aylmer. I knew what a gallant

soldier he was, for I had been on service with him in the frontier expedition of Hunza Nagar in 1891, when he blew in the gate of Nilt Fort and won a V.C. I doubt if the authorities at home grasped the difficulties he had to contend with in the way of floods, rain, want of transport, and last, but not least, want of experience and training in a large proportion of his troops. Of the Indian troops that formed the bulk of his force, large numbers were raw, untrained recruits. I sent Aylmer a telegram in which I tried to convey the sympathy I felt for him; I knew that his heart must be broken.

I wired on 11th March to G.H.Q., repeating it to Corps, asking them to give me an approximate date for the concentration of the 13th Division, including its artillery, with the Relief Force, and said I would do all that was possible to hold on till that date.

On 12th March a boom I had ordered to be rigged up to protect our craft, which were moored to the bank along the town, from floating mines, was in position. I ordered the Military Governor to call on the town to supply us on payment with 1,430 maunds of barley, as I had reason to believe that more grain remained hidden by the inhabitants. I threatened, if the grain were not forthcoming, to search and punish heavily where it was found.

The flood protection works, which had been carried out under the direction of the Divisional Engineer Commander, were now to be tested. The river was distinctly rising. On 11th March it rose six inches in twenty-four hours.

There was a distinct feeling of gloom and depression in the garrison at Aylmer's failure on 8th March. Serious doubt was in the minds of many, and desertions among the Indian troops increased accordingly—five more Indian soldiers, Mohamedans, three from the 67th Punjabis, one from the 22nd Punjabis, and a Havildar from the 103rd Mahrattas. The effect of a siege is demoralising on all troops, but on Indians it is especially so. They seemed to lose spirit very quickly. On the other hand the British soldier was simply splendid. The more the trouble increased, the more cheery he seemed. The effect on the Arabs of the town was, needless to say, very bad.

From newspapers dropped into Kut by the aeroplanes I had read Sir Ian Hamilton's despatches of the Gallipoli operations and knew that the 13th Division of the New Army, now coming to join our relief force, had been severely mauled on the last day of the repulse of the Allies by the Turks. It had apparently lost 4,000 killed and wounded out of a total of some 10,000 men, two of its battalions being practically annihilated. This meant that the 13th Division, if at anything like full strength, would be largely composed of raw drafts.

On 10th March I had issued another *communiqué* to the troops

at Kut, as I felt and saw gloom and despondency not only in the countenances of the troops, but in those of the officers of my entourage :—

" As on a former occasion I take the troops of all ranks into my confidence again and repeat the two following telegrams from General Aylmer, by which they will see that our Relieving Force has again failed to relieve us.

1*st Telegram*—8th March.

" ' To-day's operations terminated in a gallant but unsuccessful attempt to storm Dujailah Redoubt. Troops pushed home attack and carried out the operation with great gallantry, but the enemy was able to mass reinforcements which arrived from left bank at Magasis and from Shumran and we were not able to break through. Unless the enemy retires from his present position on the right bank, which does not seem probable, we shall be unable to maintain ourselves in present position owing to the lack of water, and unless the enemy evacuates the Essinn position to-night we shall be obliged to withdraw to our previous position at Wadi.'

2*nd Telegram*—8th March.

" ' We have been unable to break through to relieve you to-day and may have to withdraw to Wadi to-morrow, but hope to make another attack before long and relieve you at an early date. Please wire movements of enemy, who in any case suffered most severely, as their repeated counter-attacks have been repulsed with heavy loss.'

" I know you will all be deeply disappointed to hear this news. We have now stood a three months' siege in a manner which has called upon you the praise of our beloved King and our fellow country-men in England, Ireland, Scotland and India, and all this too after your brilliant battles of Kut-al-Amara and Ctesiphon, and your retirement to Kut, all of which feats of arms are now famous.

" Since 5th December you have passed three months of cruel uncertainty, and to all men and to all people uncertainty is intolerable.

" As I say, on the top of all this comes the second failure to relieve us. I ask you to give a little sympathy to me, who have commanded you in these battles referred to ; and who, having come to the Division as a stranger, now love my command with a depth of feeling I have never known in my life before.

" When I mention myself I would couple the names of the Generals under me, whose names are distinguished in the Army as leaders of men.

" I am speaking to you as I did before, straight from the

heart, and, as I say, I ask your sympathy for my feelings, having promised you relief on certain dates on the promise of those ordered to relieve us. Not their fault, no doubt—do not think that I blame them! They are giving their lives freely, and deserve our gratitude and admiration. I want you to help me again as before. I have asked General Aylmer for the next attempt, which must be made before the end of this month, to bring such numbers as will break down all resistance and leave no doubt of the issue. Large reinforcements are reaching him, including an English Division of 17,000 men, the leading brigade of which must have reached Wadi by now, i.e., General Aylmer's Headquarters. In order then to hold out I am killing a large number of horses so as to reduce the quantity of grain eaten every day and I have had to reduce your ration. It is necessary to do this in order to keep our flag flying. I am determined to hold out and I know you are with me in this heart and soul.

CHARLES TOWNSHEND,
Major-General.

Kut-al-Amara.
10th March, 1916."

On 16th March I received a telegram from G.H.Q., dated 14th March, 1916:—

"Please tell Townshend not to make terms with Turks until he hears from me. Acknowledge."

To this I sent the following reply on the same date.

"Kindly inform Chief India that there was never the slightest intention of any negotiation with the Turks unless there was any doubt in the mind of the Army Commander about the possibility of relieving me, and, not only that, but unless he and Government approved.

"The idea in my mind was to come away from Kut without any loss of prestige, if Kut has to fall, and to save Government humiliation. Very possibly the Turks would not give such terms, and then I would not take any others, but would stand till we were overpowered or no food left, when I should endeavour to cut my way out with those who volunteer to come with me."

On the same date I received the following telegram from G.H.Q. "Commander in Chief, India, forwards the following extract of a wire from C.I.G.S., London. Begins:—

"'Reference recent telegrams on subject of operations for relief of Kut. You realise, I am sure, that the successful relief of Kut, combined with a Russian success, would change the situation in the East enormously to our advantage, and indeed throughout the whole world. We should be able to send troops from Egypt to the main theatre, in fact the advantages can

hardly be overestimated.' Ends. Chief adds: 'It would be a great help to us if Gorringe and Townshend would send their views in the form of an appreciation.'"

I complied with this request on the same day in the form of a series of notes and observations. This appreciation will be found in the Appendix to Part IV.

On 11th March I ordered 417 horses to be killed to enable the troops to last on the amount of grain available up to 15th April, and I ordered 71 artillery horses and 800 mules to be taken off the ration list and put on grass alone. The total number of animals required daily for butchery was 25; and, up to 15th April, 400 horses and 600 mules were earmarked for this purpose. I hoped to save 100 of the most valuable of the officers' chargers.

On the night of 15th-16th March, the rising river flooded the first-line trenches, including "B" Redoubt, and these had to be evacuated, thus making the "middle line" the principal line of resistance. This almost isolated the Fort, but its communication way remained watertight. The Turks were also compelled by the floods to evacuate their first-line trenches opposite my north-westerly and north-easterly sections of defence. Accordingly they fell back—and were severely punished by our fire as they did so.

On 17th March I telegraphed to Corps, repeating to General Headquarters, as follows:—

"If Tigris rises before you can relieve me, which I do not think probable, I suppose you have considered the Sheikh Saad-Kut road by right bank, which has never been known to be closed. If water comes into the Dujailah depression as map says, you will have water after fifteen miles' march and then could come straight into Kut. To stop such a move the enemy would have to leave his entrenchments at Essinn and come into the open to meet you, which would be what you want. This would be, I take it, the best way to do it, if it were not for the great difficulty of concentrating back to Sheikh Saad from Wadi, but you remember how Wolfe manœuvred up and down the St. Lawrence above Quebec, in ships, in order to mystify Montcalm before fixing an actual landing-place."

On 17th March I received the following telegram from General Gorringe:—

"16th March, 10.30 p.m. Will inform you in due course of plan of operations; meanwhile rest assured that every possible effort will be made to relieve you by 15th April. We are all confident that next time we shall win through and so enable you to bring to a successful issue your gallant defence of Kut."

On 17th March I received the following wire from Army Headquarters, dated 16th March, from Chief, General Staff, India :

" ' It is essential with reference to para. 6 of Townshend's wire that both you and I know definitely to what date General Townshend can hold out. He has changed his estimation three times and the whole conduct for the relief is materially affected by the question of date.' Ends.

" ' This has reference to your No. 69/259/G of 11th March, in which 17th April was given. The time to which supplies will last will be wired please. Repeated Corps to G.H.Q.' "

I answered on 19th March : " In my 69/292/G of 15th March I definitely gave 15th as the date. In my 69/259/G of 11th March, I gave about a month indefinitely, mentioning 17th April as the date and saying that my Staff was working out the exact date. My reasons for changing the dates are as follows : I was given first to understand I should be relieved by 10th January, up to which date and beyond I had ample supplies. When that effort failed I had to commandeer the grain in the town of Kut, on payment. The grain was found to be some hundreds of maunds short in one case when actually removed into the magazines. Amateurs at such work, we did not understand the great wastage incurred always in cleaning and sifting grain for issue. It was the greatest luck there was any grain at all in Kut to fall back upon. This grain from the Hai district was accumulated here by merchants who owing to war had not been able to send it into Persia by caravan route as usual. 15th April is the date. I can get no more grain from the town after then."

The casualties on 18th March were 52, the enemy firing some 80 rounds into the town in half an hour, between 6 and 6.30. p.m. At 6.45 p.m. their German aviator flew over Kut in his monoplane, dropping four bombs, one of which hit the hospital, passed through the flimsy beams, boughs, and matting, forming the roof, and exploded against the wall in the main ward of the sick and wounded British soldiers. It killed six outright and wounded twenty-six, of whom fourteen died in a day or two. This naturally caused the greatest indignation on our part, and I should have been sorry for the German aviator after this incident had an accident to his machine brought him down in our lines. I cannot think he did this on purpose—in spite of later happenings in France. Nevertheless it was a remarkable fact that shells constantly struck the hospital, in spite of the flag over it. I was assured afterwards by Turkish officers that it was most difficult to see Kut town from their batteries. It was covered by a belt of palm trees, and often by a mirage or haze ; and the usual range-mark was the mosque in the town, which showed above the palm grove.

I asked Corps by wireless to retaliate by sending aeroplanes to bomb the Shumran Camp, and to drop a smoke-ball over two big naval guns we could see being placed in position, so as to give us a range. This was done, and our 5-inch guns managed to dismount these guns, which, luckily for us, could never be put into action again. The enemy had begun to get much more active, and generally chose the night time to bombard us. They devoted much attention to trying to sink our one remaining gunboat, the *Sumana*, moored to the shore between mahelas to protect her, and protected by breastworks of sand-bags, etc.

The river had begun to drop again and the lake between our first-line defences and the middle line had begun to subside. There were rumours amongst the Arabs in the town that the enemy were collecting large numbers of " mashufs " up the Hai River, in order to ferry troops across the Tigris and effect a lodgment in the town. I made my dispositions accordingly, installed a search-light opposite the mouth of the Hai, and redoubled the vigilance of the 18th Brigade, in whose zone of defence the town was.

On 21st March I wired to Gorringe, repeating to G.H.Q., and expressed my disbelief in the supposed grouping of the enemy's forces between me and the Relief Force on the left bank, which showed extraordinary dissemination. " I can hardly believe that the Turkish Commander could be such a fool so to violate the principle of Economy of Force as to group one body at Hannah, one at Nakhailat, and another at Madug, all these bodies being much too distant for effective mutual support against a blow by your concentrated mass."

On 22nd March the enemy's aeroplane flew over Kut at noon, dropping incendiary bombs and trying to hit my house. He succeeded in hitting the stables, but no damage was done, as the bomb did not act. The enemy opened a heavy bombardment with his heavy guns at 5.30 a.m., from batteries installed along his third line of entrenchments and redoubts, bringing a heavy converging fire to bear on Kut town, and paying attention only to the town. Four of these guns were firing high explosives. We opened fire in return at 6.45 with all guns that would bear ; this bombardment ceased at 7.45. One of our two naval horse-boats, with 4.7 guns in each, was hit, but was beached before she could sink. The Turks continued their violent bombardment again at 8 o'clock and stopped at 9, after firing about 600 rounds. Our casualties were about sixteen killed and wounded. I reported this to Gorringe, asking if there were any sign of a retirement in front of him, as this would account for an otherwise inexplicable bombardment, I asked also if his aeroplanes had reported any move of the enemy up river. I was led to think of a possible retirement of the enemy and raising of the siege of Kut by the

fact that Armenia was in danger and needed every available Turkish soldier to stem the Russian advance in that direction. Troops from Madug could easily be withdrawn in the night and marched past Kut without our knowledge, and to cover such a retirement the besieging force at Kut would naturally bombard to take off our attention and keep us in respect.

I received an answer from Corps on the same day that the enemy's movements visible down stream of Kut all pointed to a move up the river. Gorringe was trying to find out by aeroplane reconnaisance whether they were doing so, but the indications might be a blind. This was followed by another wire at 10.30 p.m., that, as a result of the aeroplane reconnaissance, the enemy had increased their troops on both banks of the river and there were no signs of a withdrawal anywhere. Gorringe added that his bridge was almost ready for use and that the situation was quiet on both banks.

On the same date, I sent the following telegram to Corps, repeating to General Headquarters :—

" I should be glad to get an indication of which bank you intend to operate by as soon as you have decided on your project. You need not fear it will leak out as I shall take all precautions. I see that notwithstanding the greatly over-extended entrenched line from Nakhailat to Atab, practically fourteen miles (which on a European calculation would require four army corps to hold, i.e., four miles to an army corps), the bulk of the enemy's forces are still on the left bank and that Aylmer's estimate of 8,000 Turks on the right bank still holds good more or less. This makes the right bank very tempting, I must say, as he is weak everywhere if the attacker has good troops. Aylmer told me that his right bank push would comprise seven brigades ; from what happened I cannot believe that he had more than four. I have never been told what his losses were nor the numbers he attacked with, but in a private letter by aeroplane he said that he all but succeeded."

The only answer I got to this wire was a telegram from Corps Commander, dated 24th March : " Casualties on 8th-9th March were :

" Killed	513
Wounded	2508
Missing	455
Total	3476

Present strength of Tigris Army Corps :—

Bayonets	28661
Sabres	1312
Total	29973

Guns 108."

At 11 a.m. I directed our heavy guns to shell a hostile cavalry camp which had appeared close to the bridge over the Hai River. At a range of some 9,000 yards, we put shells right into the camp, stampeding horses in every direction and causing the utmost disorder. Had our heavy guns been able to fire quickly we should have made a fine bag, but the appalling slowness of the fire enabled the cavalry to strike camp and get away with little loss.

From 10 p.m. till midnight on 23rd March, the enemy's guns bombarded Kut heavily. They started again at 1.30 a.m., and went on all through the night, different batteries relieving each other. Only the heavy guns were firing. I did not answer the fire, as we had only a little oil left for the lanterns for night-firing with the guns, and had to save it in case a real attack by infantry was delivered. Our casualties were only eleven. I now put everyone available in Kut on to protection of the houses against heavy artillery bombardment, and special trouble was taken to protect our mills.

Corps wired me at night on 23rd March that the river had risen one foot in twelve hours, while the Suweika Marsh was spreading and threatening the enemy's camp and trenches on the northern side of Hannah. Um-el-Brahm had stopped spreading and had receded considerably, as our people had diked the Orah Canal and blocked all the cuts and canals which feed this marsh. That day's aeroplane reconnaissance showed that the river was overflowing the right bank in places. There were no signs of the enemy between Azizieh and Shumran, which camp was much reduced in troops and now contained only a hospital, depot, etc.*

Owing to the doubts in my mind as to the success of the Relief Force, in spite of its strength, I sent the following telegram on 25th March to Corps, repeating it to Headquarters :—

" There is one serious question to be considered by you in this relief operation in addition to all you already have, and that is the feeding of my force here. If you do not arrive till nearly 15th April, remember that my food will be entirely finished then; and that, although my combatants number 8,390, not including sick and wounded, yet the number of mouths to feed amounts to some 13,400. The Indian followers equal 2,500, S. and T. Corps and Medical Establishment some 700. About 1,470 are in hospital. If your relief operations fail, as please God they will not, and the place falls, you would have to send, under armistice I suppose, food here, as surely the Turks would not have means to feed all these people ; they are short of supplies themselves."

We observed what looked like a flying-bridge near Madug on

* The bulk of the hostile troops at Shumran had crossed by the bridge of boats at that place to the left bank opposite and encamped there.

27th March. An iron lighter, estimated as about one hundred feet long, could be seen moving to and fro on the river, besides some pontoons, and shears could be seen on both banks at Madug. This lighter must have been the one which broke adrift in a high wind at Kut in the first few days of the siege, which the gunners at the Fort claimed to have sunk. I wired to Corps asking for verification of this. I also saw a waggonette and a victoria with cavalry escort moving west on the left bank during the morning, evidently on the way back to Shumran from down river. I ascribed them to Von der Goltz, who might be returning from an inspection.

On 28th March I sent a personal telegram to Sir Percy Lake concerning the state of health of the garrison. I had 560 cases of scurvy in hospital at this date. I feared an increase of the sick list as the weather was now beginning to get hot, and the smells and stenches in Kut, already bad enough, would soon become intolerable. These, with the heat added, would undoubtedly bring on epidemics. Therefore I hoped that no time would be lost in making the push. The Indian troops were weak and consequently dejected; the British troops held their own, owing to eating horse-meat. All of us, I added, felt the strain very much. Speaking personally, I found the responsibility of the open field nothing compared with that of a siege. The probability of floods now came to add to my anxieties. I repeated that the authorities in India would do well, if, after the relief of Kut, the Sixth Division, utterly worn out and shattered, without horses, equipment, or clothing, was sent to India to refit. I reminded him that the siege had now lasted longer than that of Ladysmith.

All the latter half of March was a constant struggle against the Tigris, which, in full flood, was compelling the evacuation of trenches. I had to put every man at work to prevent the inundation breaking into Kut town, and so flooding us out altogether. The same struggle was going on on the part of the Turks and the Relief Force down below Kut.

On 30th March I proposed to Gorringe that in case the enemy constructed a bridge at Magasis, as there were twenty-two pontoons and the lighter above-mentioned there, he should try to destroy it by aerial bombing at night. Meanwhile I would also endeavour to destroy it by using the *Sumana* to ram it. A bridge would make a great difference to the enemy in the coming battle. On 29th March I had observed three more pontoons being dragged by men along the right bank from Shumran to the Hai. I supposed this was with the intention of throwing a second bridge over the Hai to facilitate retirement from the Essinn position in case of necessity.

On the same date I sent the following telegram to Corps repeating it to Headquarters :—

"I suppose you have got your brigade of 60-pounders by now. Is there anything more to come up? I feel certain you understand the great difference that every day makes to us in this state of well-nigh intolerable suspense. Once you have got all your forces and all your means united in your hands I trust you will not let the siege be protracted, especially as the floods are now a great and serious anxiety to me. Thrice now my subordinates have been wrong in their grain estimates, and to-day I am given the news that we have four days' less food than the figures they gave me. I suppose this is theft, both by troops and Arabs, although we have a guard of convalescents on the food magazines. However, my staff assure me the deficit is in the cleaning. To hold on to 15th April I am again reducing the ration of the troops. The sepoys are dejected enough already, and now I have again to reduce the ration. I have 580 cases of scurvy among the Indian troops. The enemy hauled five pontoons to the Hai from Shumran to-day by the right bank and three yesterday. I hope you will let me know as soon as you have decided which bank to come by and not let me be ignorant till the last minute. Any co-operation by the right bank, as you know well, is most difficult for me to carry out, and now the *Sumana* has been disabled. The stop-valve was shot away to-night. Have asked you in another wire to send up parts from the *Shihab** or *Shurur* (tug-boats) if you can, as I could use the *Sumana* to ram their bridge if they make it. With the current she could smash it easily."

On 31st March at 9 a.m. a brigade of Turks with transport was observed moving from Sinn Ridge towards Imam Mansur. Eventually it halted near Atab. A similar column, also with transport, was seen moving westwards on the left bank. The camp south-east of Imam Mansur, it was also noticed, had considerably increased.

* These spare parts were to be sent up by aeroplane, but the stop-valve was mended by the Engineers in course of twenty-four hours.

CHAPTER XVII

THE ATTACK ON EL HANNAH

A TELEGRAM from General Gorringe received on 31st March :—

" Preparations for your relief are well forward, and you may be assured that I shall not be a day later than is absolutely necessary. According to Baghdad records and all information, the last flood was the maximum we are likely to have. Another one of possibly equal height may be expected about 10th to 15th next month. The floods threaten and are causing much trouble in the Hannah position to the Turks ; so reports the Turkish deserter yesterday, who adds that their food supplies are very short and the casualties daily from our fire are considerable."

On 2nd April, I received a wire from Headquarters asking me how I proposed to ferry men over the river if need arose, and at what pace I could do it ? It was supposed I had used the hides of my butchered animals to make into rafts. The whole of this subject, of course, had been thrashed out between Aylmer and myself when he was in command of Relief Force. In my reply to Headquarters, I said there would still appear to be some misapprehension as regards the difficulties of crossing the Tigris ; that my previous telegrams had sufficiently explained my difficulties and rate of crossing to the other bank with the aid of the *Sumana* ; and now she was disabled, as I had reported on 30th March. I did not know on which bank Gorringe would advance to relieve me, though I should be told this early. I had twice made this enquiry.

If Gorringe came by the right bank, I had made it clear several times that I could co-operate with gun-fire within range, but that I could not begin crossing my troops till the troops of the relief force put in an appearance, because the enemy had guns installed on the bank commanding my crossing. In short, Gorringe must not rely on my aid to win through, any more than Buller relied on, or received aid from, White at Ladysmith, although White did not have an impassable, five-hundred-yards-broad river running at five knots an hour on three sides of him, and the fourth side wired, flooded, and enclosed by a triple line of redoubts and entrenchments.

" Nor do I think," I continued, " that Gorringe, with 29,000 men and 108 guns, which strength will easily give him a

Maximum Force of 24,000 men and ample gun-power—will require assistance from me to win through a division and a half, or possibly two weak divisions, of the enemy, holding a front of fourteen miles, which extent should on principle require three army corps to hold. My force has now been besieged some four months; the Indian troops are weak and dejected on the total ration of ten ounces of unclean barley meal, and depressed by the two unsuccessful attempts of the relief force to relieve Kut. Had the relief force arrived in January, we could have co-operated with vigour; but now it is very different, and it is the same in every case in history of a beleaguered force.

"If Gorringe comes by the left bank, I will attack the enemy in his entrenchments opposite the Fort—and we shall have to wade through floods to do it. At any rate, Gorringe can be assured I shall do the utmost in my power to co-operate on either bank. I have never contemplated using the skins of the butchered animals for rafts, as I still possess three barges and a dozen mahelas and only one tow for the lot—a steam launch. The skin rafts cannot be towed without falling to pieces and are no use in a strong current. There is no brush-wood or straw to stuff the skins, no wood for platforms for the rafts, all available woodwork had been used to make two flying-bridges and trestles for bridging the Hai, in accordance with Aylmer's wishes."

We had not only to fight against the floods, but scurvy was added. The supply of vegetables from the gardens was only enough to supply the hospital, and they were most beneficial in the cure of the disease. But the anomaly, as I told Colonel Hehir, the A.D.M.S., was that "my fighting men got scurvy from having no vegetables. You cure them after weeks in hospital by giving them vegetables which I want to give my fighting men whilst they are well to prevent them from getting scurvy."

But there was nothing to be done. The men gathered herbs and grass and made spinach, but in some cases wrong sorts were used and men became very ill with acute diarrhœa. Some even died of poisoning in this manner, including Brigadier-General Hoghton.

About 4th April, I asked Headquarters to send me gold to place in my empty treasure-chest, but I received a reply that it seemed unnecessary to pay for local supplies otherwise than by receipts.

I answered that there appeared to be a misunderstanding as to the money question in Kut. I wanted a treasure-chest full of cash for the following reasons: The men had no pay, and were always asking for some to buy local luxuries, such as tea and tobacco, from the town Arabs at any price. (In many cases officers gave 48 rupees for a pound of Arab tobacco.) The

Arabs would not take paper-money, and at the beginning of the siege charged the soldier one rupee to change a ten-rupee note, for they thought all along that the Turks must win, and were absolutely hostile to us. I could not flog 6,000 people into taking paper money. All I could do was to keep them in good behaviour by shooting one now and then *pour encourager les autres* when spies, etc., were caught. When I commandeered all the grain in the town, I paid for many hundreds of maunds in rupee notes, and in many cases we had to search long to find it. If the grain had not been found in the town we must have fallen in February, for when I entered Kut our supplies amounted to one month for British troops and fifty-five days for Indian troops. As for paying with receipts, as we did in the South African War—and how undesirable it was and how much trouble did it cause !—it was quite out of the question here. Another reason which influenced me in asking for money for the treasure-chest was that should the relief force fail to relieve us, officers and men would go into captivity without a penny in their pockets.

General Gorringe had decided to renew the effort to relieve Kut by the left bank ; whilst reinforcements were arriving he had investigated the possibility of advancing on Kut by the right bank from Sheikh Saad, but had decided that the route over which the troops must pass was not flood-proof and was liable to inundation by the breaking of the " bunds " on the right bank of the Tigris by the enemy, under whose control they were. He concluded therefore that a more favourable result would be obtained by an effort by the left bank. The attack on the Turkish position at El Hannah was the first step, and preparations were put in hand for this operation. But this object of operations was not known to me. I was in ignorance of his plans, and only discovered the above from reading Sir Percy Lake's despatches whilst a prisoner at Constantinople.

The 7th Division had been engaged in sapping up to the enemy's front trenches at Hannah on the left bank. They were under continuous fire, and were hampered by the floods, but by March 28th their sapheads were only 150 yards from the Turkish front line. The 3rd Division was apparently installed on the right bank.

On 1st April the 13th (British) Division moved up from Sheikh Saad to relieve the 7th Division in their front trenches preparatory to the assault. I did not even know of the arrival of this division at the front.

All I knew was that General Gorringe was going to make an effort on the morning of 5th April. On the 4th I received the following telegram from him :—

" My plans for the final stage of operations must necessarily depend on measure of our success in the first stage, which

commences to-morrow, on the state of the river and flood, and on enemy's dispositions, all of which factors cannot be ascertained at present. I quite appreciate that your co-operation must in the first instance be purely passive, but you are the rock on which I hope to split the Turkish forces, and your co-operation by gun-fire, etc., on his ferry at Magasis, and by containing enemy on left bank on the last day's operations will assist us greatly. I will keep you informed fully of our progress. This has been repeated to H.Q."

On the night of 4th April I wired to Gorringe, wishing him good luck in his effort, and said that the Turks at Essinn had just shown a green light, which meant " ammunition wanted," followed by a red one, signifying that the British were advancing. Gorringe replied that all his preparations were made and he should attack at dawn.

I continue this narrative with a few extracts taken *verbatim* from my diary.

" 5th April. A violent bombardment heard at 5.20 a.m. Flashes of bursting shells clearly visible over El Hannah. This bombardment continued to 6 a.m. and then ceased.

" At 8.35 a.m. message from Gorringe to say that he had taken the first five lines of the El Hannah position. Here is good news at last.

" At 10 a.m. a transport convoy of the enemy moved back from Essinn to the Hai on the right bank, appeared to fill up at Atab, went back to Shiekh Imam Mansur and waited, it seemed, all day.

" 10.45 a.m. I opened fire on the Hai bridge with a 5-inch gun, which made very bad practice at 11,000 yards' range, putting a couple of shots over the Hai and one into that river as the transport proceeded over the bridge towards Shumran.

" I issued the same projects as on 4th March to Brigade Commanders, the former slightly modified, for co-operation with Gorringe by either bank.

" At 1 p.m. I ordered Maule (C.R.A.) to open fire with the heavy guns on Magasis ferry, about the same range as that of the Hai bridge—11,000 yards. The direction was very bad, but one or two shots fell in the river at the ferry. There were a number of Turks about there, but no considerable movement. Comsiderable numbers of hostile infantry were withdrawn from the network of trenches round the Woolpress village, and at 8.40 a.m. were apparently being directed on the Hai River bridge, moving with first-line transport. At 4 p.m. the ferry at Magasis was again being used—small parties being taken to the right bank from the left. The *Sumana's* boiler was mended to-day and steam got up in the evening. During the day I received a message from Army Headquarters that the War Office wired as follows :—' Marsh wires 6th April that Baratoff

has been ordered to advance on Khanikin immediately, using all available force.' See my appreciation of the situation 15th March, para. 9, sent to G.H.Q. by their order to send to Commander-in-Chief in India. Baratoff should have been moving three weeks ago.

"I am much surprised to hear nothing from Gorringe. It produces uneasiness. All nerves very strung at the hope of relief from this state of suspense and uncertainty. No news in the night. We heard a bombardment on the left bank about Sannaiyat in the morning of 6th April, and, it seemed, a rather violent one at 7.30 a.m. I wired to Gorringe for news, feeling uneasy by now, also telling him I could see a 40-pounder gun being towed by bullocks going east at Imam-al-Mansur, having come evidently from Hai bridge.

"6th April. There was much activity at Magasis ferry at 8 a.m., and I ordered fire by the 5-inch guns in consequence on this point. Men could be seen being ferried across, but the movement ceased after some eight rounds had been used. The observers at Fort had strict orders to keep a sharp look-out on Magasis Ferry, and to keep me posted instantly of any movement there. A haze and mirage made accurate observation difficult till about 4 p.m."

I sent a telegram to Headquarters during the afternoon. "Can you give me any news of Gorringe? I have not heard from him since 8.30 yesterday morning, when he wired he had carried the first five lines of the Hannah position. I wired this morning asking for news. It is now 4.30 p.m. and I have heard nothing. No news I suppose is good news but it makes my people uneasy. I do not want to bother Gorringe in the midst of work, but he should not keep one like this without news." I also sent a wire to Gorringe that there was every indication that the enemy were transferring troops from the right to the left bank at Magasis ferry, that I had been firing at the ferry the greater part of the afternoon accordingly, and had interrupted their movements. I proposed to continue at a slow rate of fire throughout the night if this met with his wishes. I said that I thought that he ought to give me an idea of what was going on. "I have not heard from you now for thirty-four hours." This wire I repeated to Headquarters.

"The river has risen 3 feet $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches in the last twenty-four hours. At the Fort the flood is an inch higher than the last high flood level and the intervening ground between the enemy's trenches and ours is flooded. In the north-west section of defence there are fifteen inches of water in the reserve communication way; everyone is being put on flood protection work."

The wireless could not get into communication for part of the day with Corps or Headquarters, the atmosphere interfering.

At 4 p.m. our wireless was called up, but before a message could be taken atmospherics interfered. Lieut. Greenwood, in charge of the wireless, was slightly wounded by a shell in the evening when returning from inspecting his aerial.

At 10 p.m. I received a message from Gorringe in answer to my question if he desired me to fire on the Magasis ferry through the night: "Not at present. Better reserve fire for later." I was still more surprised that nothing was mentioned about his action that day.

Mr. Spooner, the Chaplain, came to me during the afternoon to tell me that the date was most propitious. He showed me the Collect for the week—the 4th Sunday in Lent:

"Grant, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, that we, who for our evil deeds do worthily deserve to be punished, by the comfort of Thy grace may mercifully be relieved; through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen."

He was a great help to me in the siege, for he was always cheery and brave under fire; he was loved by the men. I shall always have the greatest respect and esteem and affection for him.

By a Reuter's telegram received on 5th April, I saw that the question of our advance on Baghdad with an inadequate force was on the *tapis*, and I was much interested to read that:—"In Lords, Beresford asked was General Townshend consulted with reference to Baghdad expedition, had he less than a division when he started, should he not have had three, and was Townshend or Nixon responsible for the advance on Ctesiphon. Lord Islington said he was unable to answer first question prior to advance, and nothing was known of any representations addressed to Nixon by Townshend with reference to advance to Ctesiphon which was authorised by Imperial Government on advice of Nixon and Government of India. Lord Crewe, supplementing Islington's statement, said that there had not been single instance in war in which the military or naval commander had been asked to undertake operation with forces which he declared insufficient, he made that statement without smallest reserve. Ends." This supplement of Lord Crewe's I should describe as an unhappy minuteness of detail.

On 7th April, in the early morning, I received a telegram from Corps, dated 6th April, 1.23 p.m.:—

"We captured Abu Roman position yesterday afternoon. Last night we took by assault the trenches north of Felahieh bend. We attacked left of Sannaiyat position this morning, and have made good our footing within 400 yards of this same, where we are now entrenched." (Abu Roman mounds are on the right bank, opposite Sannaiyat, and in the locality where I bivouacked my division previous to my advance to

Nakhailat to fight the Battle of Kut-al-Amara. Felahieh and Sannaiyat are on the left bank.)

From this I gathered that Gorringe had divided his forces on each bank of the river and was attacking with both of them. I knew nothing of his dispositions or plans, and this I continually complained of, both to him and to General Head Quarters.

At 6.45 a.m. on 7th April we heard a violent bombardment on the left bank, about Sannaiyat we reckoned. About 7.15 a.m. it still continued with unabated violence. There was great excitement among the troops and the Arabs of the town. The rupee went up in value greatly with the Arabs, and the troops were cheery and glad. The housetops were covered with spectators watching the smoke of the shells in the distance down river.

At 7.30 this cannonade ceased, and was followed by silence. Heavy artillery fire was resumed at 9.30, lasting till 10.20, when it slackened. We fired all the morning on Magasis Ferry, having to cease fire at 10.30 a.m., owing to mirage. On this day I received a wire from Head Quarters in reference to a telegram they had received from the Secretary of State, saying that allegations were being made at home that I had protested formally against the advance on Baghdad, stating that the force at my command was quite insufficient, and asking me to telegraph what I had to say. My answer was :—

" This is my reply, which I trust will be allowed to go in *verbatim*, as there must be no misunderstanding. I most certainly considered we were running grave risk in continuing the strategic offensive on Baghdad with only my weak division, of which my British battalions were reduced to mere half-battalions, and all casualties at Battle of Kut-al-Amara had been filled up with raw recruits from India, and over 300 miles from the sea with no other troops to support me. Moreover, operations in Gallipoli theatre indicated our troops in that zone evidently contained and held by Turks, who would undoubtedly reinforce Mesopotamian theatre to save Baghdad. Although Sir John Nixon had given me the entire conduct of operations, beginning with Kurna-Amarah in May up to date, and gave me his confidence, it will be understood how difficult it was for me, a subordinate general, to give my opinion unasked to the Army Commander. However, I considered it my absolute duty to indicate to him the risk I ran in moving forward to attack the well-known strong position of Ctesiphon and occupy Baghdad with my present force. After having pointed out the risk I had my conscience clear and was ready to undertake any order he might give me. In consequence then I telegraphed my 120-G (*not* B) of 3rd October from Azizieh, which place I had halted at in my pursuit of Turks after Kut-al-Amara battle, finding they had rallied at Ctesiphon. The exact words in which I pointed out risk were as

follows. Begins: 'On the other hand, if Government desire to occupy Baghdad then I am of the opinion that a methodical advance from Kut by two divisions or an army corps, or one division closely supported by another division, exclusive of line of communication troops garrisoning the important places of Amarah, Ahwaz, Nasiriyeh, is absolutely necessary unless great risk is to be incurred.' Ends.

"That I consider sufficiently indicated the risk. In my opinion a subordinate commander cannot do more than that, to protest in full sense of meaning of the word would not be discipline.

"I should like to add that previous to the battle of Kut-al-Amara I told Sir John Nixon that I hoped not only to beat the Turks in their position at Kut-al-Amara, but completely rout them as at Kurna, in which case I would conduct the pursuit myself as I did at Kurna, and if I saw a chance of running into Baghdad on the heels of the rout I should do so and take the risk as I did in May in the case of occupying Amarah. But the Turks rallied in formidable numbers at Ctesiphon, and so I halted at Azizieh. I had gained much knowledge of Turkish reinforcements in Mesopotamia and experience of battle of Kut showed me I had very different troops to deal with compared with those at Kurna, and saw that it behoved me to be cautious, and that to take Baghdad meant at least an army corps.

"I mention this to show that I had myself in the first case contemplated getting into Baghdad, and that I am quite willing to undertake all responsibility for my actions."

In answer to my various protests at not receiving any news, I had a wire from Gorringe at 10.40 a.m. to say that he sent me messages at midday and the day before, and that he would keep me daily informed at midday. He said he would rather I reserved fire on the ferry for the present, as it would be more effective when he got far enough forward to reach it with guns from his side also. In this way we should be able to prevent any movement across the river by our combined fire. He had last night (6th April) pushed forward on the right bank, and had now a forward position from which he was able to enfilade the enemy's position at Sannaiyat, for the capture of which his preparations were now progressing. Yesterday he had been rather hampered by the rising of the river, but by now his "bunds" were all secured.

Head Quarters authorised me at this time to award as many Distinguished Conduct Medals for gallantry as I considered deserving, up to twenty for British troops for the defence of Kut, and forty Distinguished Service Medals and ten Orders of Merit for Indian troops subsequent to the withdrawal of the force from Ctesiphon to Kut, i.e., since 3rd December. Thus the honours and rewards of the British rank and file and

Indian officers and rank and file had been attended to by Government—but no honours or rewards for British officers had been awarded for the Battles of Kurna, Kut-al-Amara, Ctesiphon, or the defence of Kut, with the exception of one or two Distinguished Service Orders and Military Crosses to subaltern ranks.

At 9.0 p.m. on 7th April we heard a very lively half-hour's bombardment in progress over Sannaiyat. On 8th April I wired to Corps, repeating to Head Quarters :—" A column of 1,000 horsemen came into sight on Square 37 D about 5 p.m. yesterday, moving from east to south-west towards the Hai bridge, near which they camped, and are not visible to-day. We put two lyddite shells to-day into Magasis Fort, and much upset their transport collected there. There was no work to speak of at the ferry there on 7th April. The gunboat *Sumana* is now working well. My mills can work no longer owing to lack of fuel. I have food up to 15th April."

At 1 p.m. on 8th April Gorringe wired me :—" The attack takes place at dawn to-morrow, and we hope to capture Sannaiyat position." I telegraphed to Gorringe, repeating to Head Quarters, in reply, that I did not want to bother him at a time when he had so much to do and to think of, but I considered he should give me more details, even if only a line or two to say whether things were going well or otherwise. I had only seven days' food and one emergency ration, and if I knew that he was in difficulties I would immediately reduce even the ration we were on. " It is essential you should tell me more than you do, for every military reason."

Was I unreasonable? I hope not. If I was I hope that Gorringe has forgiven me. It must be remembered that we had been on the rack for over four months—not to speak of the trials and anxieties of the Ctesiphon operations and the retreat to Kut. I am sure all soldiers will understand the great strain all this was.

Headquarters wired to Gorringe, repeating to me : " Army Commander knows that you must realise how essential it is for you to keep Townshend fully informed of your progress."

On 9th April (Sunday) I wired to Head Quarters asking the result of Gorringe's attack at dawn on that day. We had heard a very heavy bombardment from 5 to 6 a.m. Headquarters answered :—" The 13th Division tried to assault the position at dawn. Turks discovered advance when leading troops were within 100 yards and manned trenches in force, opening very heavy fire. Division failed to reach enemy's fire trench and is dug in, its nearest detachments being within 300 yards of enemy's position. At present they are reorganising, evacuating wounded and resting."

With reference to this action Khalil Pacha told me afterwards that the reason why the 13th Division failed was because

there were no troops following up the attack in support. "There was no depth in it," he said.

I do not know accurately what Gorringe's dispositions for his attack were, but from what I can gather I believe he had fairly equal forces on both banks of the river, making combined efforts.

My opinion as set down in my diary was that, if his principal objectives were the bulk of the hostile forces on the left bank, his Principal Mass should have been on the left bank, since the bulk of the enemy's forces was entrenched there. A bare minimum force should have been placed on the right bank just sufficient to contain the enemy's forces. In this way the principle of Economy of Force would have been observed, and Gorringe would have had a large Principal Mass, the weight and depth of which should have carried it through. Had I divided my forces at the Battle of Kut-al-Amara in Gorringe's way, I am sure that I should have been defeated instead of winning a decisive victory. This criticism is made in no carping spirit. On the contrary, I am only too grateful for the great efforts and energy and courage shown by Aylmer and Gorringe. I criticise their dispositions in the same way that I should criticise them were I the Director of such manœuvres as theirs in peace time.

The news was bad. No longer could there be any doubt about it. It was certain that I should not be relieved by 15th April.

I sent a telegram to Head Quarters, acknowledging the receipt of their telegram and pointing out that I had had no news from Gorringe. From what they had told me, it appeared to me doubtful, I said, that Gorringe could relieve me by 15th April. Therefore I had reduced the ration to seven ounces of barley, which would enable me to hold on till 17th April. After the two previous failures of Aylmer, I was forced to think that it was possible that Gorringe would not be able to relieve us at all. I said also that I supposed Gorringe's casualties had been very heavy. The situation must be faced. If Gorringe failed in his effort, the Turks would grant no terms but absolute surrender unless the course Sir Percy Lake had suggested in his wire of 30th March was adopted. If the worst came to the worst—that is to say, if the Turks would give no terms at all—I proposed to endeavour to run the blockade down the river in the *Sumana*, with six or seven hundred of the most useful men to the State—staff, artillerymen, engineers, flying corps, wireless men, etc. I asked Government to approve this step. All the remainder of my force would be left behind under a junior Brigadier-General to treat with the enemy. I added that of course I should not take such a step until it was clear that the Turks would grant nothing but surrender.

There was a full moon on 17th April. I said that the unexpected possibly might happen, the Turks might retreat unexpectedly, as they did at Shaiba. But on the other hand they might not do so. I considered that they were elated, for they had begun to shell hard again. If there were any serious doubt in Sir Percy Lake's mind as to Gorringe's ultimate success, would it not be better to begin negotiations whilst I had some food left? These negotiations, I said, should be made by the General Officer commanding the Relief Force. I added that there was not the slightest chance of my being able to break out by land, even by the Fort. The enemy's trenches were eleven feet deep and six feet wide, and all of them were inundated with the flood, which reached my own trenches. Past all the other fronts ran the impassable Tigris. In addition to all the above difficulties, as I had made evident in many telegrams of late, the troops now were very weak.

About 11 p.m. on 9th April, I received a telegram from Gorringe :—"This morning we again attacked the Sannaiyat trenches, but failed to win through. We are now consolidating our positions as close as we can to the enemy's trenches and pressing on all preparations for digging still closer with the intention of attacking again. We have been hampered by floods on the right bank stretching from the river both east and west of the Abu Roman Mounds down to the Umm-al-Brahm; this, however, is being remedied. Sannaiyat is held by the enemy in strength. Aeroplane states Beit Aiessa* was held, also Sinn banks and Dujailah, cavalry camp at Atab. These latter (i.e. cavalry) operate daily along the Jumeielat ridge and there is a position there."

The above was evidently Gorringe's second unsuccessful effort against the Sannaiyat position. I supposed, in the absence of details, that El Hannah, which Gorringe had taken previously to attacking Sannaiyat, was merely an advanced position (lightly held) to the enemy's main position at Sannaiyat.

I got no comfort from this telegram, for Gorringe told me he was "digging in again." This game exactly suited the Turks, who would dig in much faster and better than our people. I had no confidence in the plan, and I wired and told Head Quarters so. I added: "I have ordered the reduction of all rations, British and Indian, still further, to five ounces of barley meal. I can no longer favour the Indian troops in the matter of meal. There is the horse-meat, which their religious leaders in India have authorised them to eat, and, by their not having taken advantage of this, they have weakened my power of resistance by one month at least, so I have no sympathy left for them in that direction. This reduction of ration should enable me to hold on to 21st April, I think, but I will

* A small Arab house standing on the river bank.

inform you later on. Would you tell me if reinforcements are on the way up to fill gaps in the Corps, and if they are close enough at hand to turn the scale? Our 'bunds' are holding the water out. If Kut falls we shall require food sent up in ships at once under armistice; the Turks will have no spare food for us."

On 10th April I wired to Gorringe: "Of course I do not know what your losses are, or any details to speak of, but I gather that they must be considerable. I have now reduced ration to five ounces of meal for all ranks, British and Indian, which will enable me, I believe, to hold out to 21st April, but there will be no strength left in the troops to make any exertion. Do you want time now, or do you still contemplate relieving me by 15th April? I hope you have reinforcements at hand to fill up your gaps. At the digging game and holding on, remember, the Turk is as good, if not better, than our people. He is only inferior in the open out of his trenches."

It will be seen from this account of the siege of Kut that every time the Relief Force met with a reverse or a check, I made a counter-move by reducing the food ration to allow for the delays in getting up reinforcements by the Commander of the Relief Force. The great disadvantage of this plan, however, inherent in all histories of sieges, is that with the diminished food you reduce the physical strength of the garrison to an alarming extent, and consequently their courage and hope, and their fighting value to almost nothing. Consider the fighting value of my splendid troops at the Battle of Ctesiphon, when only 8,200 bayonets threw 20,000 to 24,000 Turks out of the first line of entrenchments and redoubts. Then, during the retreat—in beautiful order and discipline—from Ctesiphon to Kut, such was their fighting value that I was able to maul and throw back in disorder the 12,000 men forming the Turkish advanced guard, and continue my retreat in the same perfect order as if I were on peace manœuvres in East Anglia. These same men were now dejected and weak by reason of the long siege. Their former high hopes were giving way to despair. I speak of the bulk of my force—the Indians. The English were as tenacious and brave as ever. They were my sheet-anchor. Without the (now—alas!—skeleton) battalions of Norfolks, Dorsets, Oxfords (who showed magnificent courage and bravery at Ctesiphon, where they bore the brunt of the battle), the wing of the West Kents (the old Half Hundred), the Hampshire Territorial Infantry, and the detachments of bluejackets of the Royal Navy, Kut would have fallen, in my opinion, at the end of March.

Of course there were many exceptions among the Indian troops. The 7th Gurkhas, for example, behaved splendidly, and I counted on them as on British troops. But I must say that *towards the end* of this long siege most of the British officers

had little confidence in the Indians. Not their fault. They are not constituted by nature to stand misfortune and reverse with the same stoicism as Europeans.

On 10th April I published the following *communiqué* to the troops under my command :—

" The result of the attack of the Relief Force on the Turks entrenched in the Sannaiyat position is that the Relief Force has not yet won its way through, but is entrenched close up to the Turks, in places some two to three hundred yards distant. General Gorringe wired me last night that he was consolidating his position as close to the enemy's trenches as he can get, with the intention of attacking again. He had had some difficulty with the flood, which he had remedied.

" I have no other details. However, you will see that I must not run any risk over the date calculated to which our rations would last—namely 15th April. As you will understand well, digging means delay, though General Gorringe does not say so.

" I am compelled therefore to appeal to you all to make a determined effort to eke out our scanty means so that I can hold out for certain till our comrades arrive, and I know I shall not appeal to you in vain.

" I have then to reduce our rations to five ounces of meal for all ranks, British and Indian.

" In this way I can hold out till 21st April, if it becomes necessary, and it is my duty to take all precautions in my power.

" I am very sorry I can no longer favour the Indian soldiers in the matter of meal, but there is no possibility of doing so now. It must be remembered that there is plenty of horse-flesh which they have been authorised by their religious leaders to eat, and I have to recall with sorrow that by not having taken advantage of this wise and just dispensation, they have weakened my power of resistance by one month.

" In my *communiqué* to you of 26th January I told you that our duty stood out plain and simple ; it was to stand here and hold up the Turkish advance on the Tigris, working heart and soul together. I expressed the hope that we would make this defence to be remembered in history as a glorious one, and I asked you in this connection to remember the defence of Plevna, which was longer than even that of Ladysmith.

" Well ! You have nobly carried out your mission ; you have nobly answered the trust and appeal I made to you. The whole British Empire, let me tell you, is ringing now with our defence of Kut.

" You will all be proud to say one day : ' I was one of the garrison at Kut ! ' As for Plevna and Ladysmith, we have outlasted them also. Whatever happens now we have all

done our duty. As I said in my report of the defence of this place, which has now been telegraphed to Head Quarters—I said that it was not possible in despatches to mention everyone, but I could safely say that every individual in this force had done his duty to his King and Country, I was absolutely calm and confident, as I told you on 26th January, of the ultimate result; and I am confident now. I ask you all, comrades of all ranks, British and Indian, to help me now in this food question in the manner I have mentioned.

CHARLES TOWNSHEND,

Kut-al-Amara, Major-General."
10th April, 1916.

The result of the above appeal to the troops was that on the very next day 5,135 Indians, including followers, were eating horse-flesh. In addition to the above *communiqué* I had sent round a memo. to General Officers commanding Brigades asking them to deal firmly with pessimistic talk and gossip amongst the officers, exampling a case with which I had had to deal.

I had a long and intimate talk with General Delamain in the trenches of the north-west front on the afternoon of 10th April, when we discussed everything. We both agreed that it would be a great piece of luck if Gorringe were now able to throw the Turks out of their position. There was no doubt that the Turks would have added another line of trenches, in addition to what already existed, in the course of a day or two.

There were two things which struck me particularly throughout these operations. They were :—

(*a*) Our people were always a month late in their plans and a division short in their numbers.

(*b*) The fundamental principles of Economy of Force and the Mass were often disregarded or violated. Always, it seemed to me, too large a force was allotted to the minimum force established on that bank of the river on which the principal effort was not to be made. Thus the Principal Mass, on the bank of the river on which the principal effort was to be made, was never strong enough.

On the same day I received a telegram from Head Quarters saying that there could be no doubt but that Gorringe could in time force his way through to Kut. In consequence, however, of yesterday's failure it was certainly doubtful if he could reach me by 15th April. It seemed to Head Quarters that there were two ways of increasing my powers of resistance :—

1st.—To evict all the inhabitants of Kut with the exception of a few who might have been of special assistance to me.

2nd.—To try to get more supplies to me by ships running the gauntlet at night. But the Navy considered that this alternative offered very slight chances of success owing to the very strong current necessitating slow progress and confining operations to moonlight nights. It might, however, be tried as a last resort after the relief force got through Sannaiyat.

They asked up to what date eviction of the inhabitants would permit me to hold out, and how I would propose to carry it out. They presumed that I had already carried out a thorough house-to-house search for concealed or buried supplies; and they said that they were considering the possibility of flooding the Turkish communications on one or both banks.

In reply, on 11th April, I said that to evict all the inhabitants of Kut, though correct in theory, was impossible in practice. The population was 6,000. On reaching Kut in my retirement from Ctesiphon, I ordered that all the inhabitants should be evicted. Sir Percy Cox came to see me on their behalf. At first I did not listen to him, saying that it was the practice of war when a place was to be defended, though it was true that it was very seldom done. Cox argued that all the women and children would perish, as they could not carry enough food with them. In the end I decided that the actual house-owners and families should remain, and turned out all Arab travellers and aliens staying at Kut—some six or seven hundred. The Turks now shot on sight all Arabs who tried to escape from the town; batches of mahela men had frequently escaped by swimming on goatskins at night, heavily fired at by the enemy's picquets along the right bank. A few nights before a survivor returned to town wounded. He said that the batch he was with were captured by the Turks on landing on the right bank. They were all tried and shot at once, he alone managing to escape. Apart from this, neither women nor children could cross the flooded area on the land side between our trenches and the enemy's, owing to the deep trenches and communicating ways covered now by the floods, which it took a reconnaissance a few nights before some hours to cross by means of ladder-bridges. If I put them on the thirty mahelas I had, on each of which one or two hundred could be packed, these boats would be fired into. It would be a massacre, the story of which would ring throughout Mesopotamia as an example of the protection which the British had guaranteed to the Arabs under our rule; and it would have a disastrous political effect.

Regarding ships running the gauntlet: I said I thought they would reach us, but there would be a heavy shell-fire on them from the moment they appeared till they got away—not to speak of the voyage. We were raked from all points of the compass, and there was no cover whatever for ships. We managed to protect the *Sumana* only by mooring mahelas around her and building up mud or sandbag walls on them.

During the siege I had got out of the town 900 tons of barley, 150 of wheat, and 1,600 of ghi (rancid butter). Without this we should have fallen long before. We were now feeding 3,500 Arabs, the remainder still possessed food of their own and could last out as long as we. The Arabs were eating horses and donkeys; and an appeal I had made to the Indian troops would, I hoped, induce *them* now to eat horse flesh. I could only hold out to 20th April, I concluded. I saw no possible way of carrying on longer. If the steamers bringing provisions could tow barges, they could reach Kut, slip their barges, turn round, and go back at full speed in one night. That would mean rations for twelve days for my force on half rations.

In a further telegram to Head Quarters on 12th April, I informed them that another careful search from house to house had been made, and only 8½ ounces of uncleaned barley-meal per day per head had been left for the inhabitants. We were feeding 3,700 Arabs, men, women and children, without means of subsistence, by soup kitchen and on mules and donkeys. I drew attention to the weak state of my troops, reduced to five ounces of barley-meal daily, in order to hold out to 21st April. If the food ships did not arrive till 21st April I believed that a large number of the non-horse-flesh-eating Indian soldiers would die. Already a certain number of them were dying daily, the A.D.M.S. reported to me, from want of food, anxiety, strain, and dejection. If on the morrow even food ships arrived, the A.D.M.S. officially informed me that, as a result of this want of food and the low state of the men, fifty per cent. of the troops would die or be invalided if they were kept in Mesopotamia in the coming hot weather. This prospect would not be confined to the Indian troops only, a large percentage of the British soldiers would die. I instanced the example of my occupation of Amarah in June the year before after the Battle of Kurna. In about one week I had 1,000 men in hospital out of the two brigades. Finally, "if the worst comes to the worst, and Kut falls, and we have no food here, as I have previously pointed out, the Turks will not have a biscuit to spare for our men, and the drama which will then be enacted is best not spoken of."

I continued that all that I had said were notorious facts, to the truth of which every officer and soldier in my force could bear testimony, and I did not think anyone could ever accuse me of pessimism.

I added that Gorringe, wiring to me on 10th April, said that time was all he required. I entirely sympathised with his efforts and difficulties, but I could not avoid observing, from my point of view, that if ever it was urgent business for a relieving force to raise a siege and not protract it, it was now—that is to say, consistently with uniting all his forces in his hand. "Gorringe knows, no doubt that every moment he delays

eminently favours the Turkish plan of passive defence and digging in; and they will dig in like moles till attacked again. It must be remembered that both Sir John Nixon and Aylmer also asked for time; and so the one month defence I bargained for has now developed into four and a half months. Longer than Plevna. Government has no cause for complaint against us, I think."

We now come to the attempt of the Commander of the Relief Force to put food into Kut by means of the aeroplane, the first time in war, I take it, that it had been attempted so to supply a beleaguered garrison with food—and I may say at once that it was a complete failure.

Asked by Head Quarters how much food I required per day, I replied that I wanted 5,000 lbs., made up of flour, sugar, chocolate, salt and ghi. That would give 6 ounces each to

British	2,970
Indians (over 3,000 followers in this total)	10,870
Town Arabs	3,700

I asked that all supplies might be double-bagged so as to avoid loss by sacks breaking when dropped from a great height.

The Officer Commanding aviation service with the Relief Force said he could do this if the weather were favourable, each machine making three trips daily. He wanted two or three days in which to design suitable fittings. I had misgivings that the air service would break down, and in any case weather conditions would greatly affect it, to say nothing of enemy aircraft, which would quickly see what was happening and obstruct our machines. I had greater hopes of the Navy. Admiral Wemyss, well known as a gallant and efficient sailor, had just arrived at Head Quarters, and I knew that he would do it if anyone could.

Anyone who has done service with Indian troops needs no description of my difficulties in interfering with their prejudices and religious feelings in the matter of food, and above all in such a question as horse-meat, so abhorrent to them. However, I determined, as the occasion was one of life or death, to make a further and decided effort to compel them to eat horse flesh. I could not have done so before since Mohamedans formed the bulk of my Indian troops, and I had had considerable trouble, not only during the defence of Kut, but even prior to my advance from Azizieh against Ctesiphon. It is not, perhaps, desirable that I should mention details. I will merely state that throughout the defence of Kut bundles of seditious pamphlets printed in Hindi and Urdu were introduced by the Turks, chiefly by means of throwing these bundles into the barbed wire of entrenchments during darkness. The pamphlets called on the Mohamedans not to fight against brothers of their own religion under pain of hell fire. Lands and wives

were offered by the Turks to all who deserted. I have had much experience of Mohamedan troops, both in the north of India and in the Sudan, and no one has a greater regard and sympathy for them than I have. It cannot be denied that I have great influence with them, and nowhere has that been proved in a more pronounced manner than in Mesopotamia.

On 12th April I accordingly published the following *communiqué* to the Indian ranks of my force, attaching to it the Principal Medical Officer's report on the health of those Indian soldiers who were daily dying through refusing to eat horse-flesh :—" In continuation of my *communiqué* to all troops, dated 10th April, and with special reference to the attached note of the A.D.M.S., in which he emphasises the vital importance of every Indian of the force at once eating horse-flesh for the preservation of his strength and even life during the next few days—I again issue an appeal to every man of you to stand by your King, your rulers, and the Government that protects you, by taking heed of the warning note of the A.D.M.S.

" You have already received permission and every encouragement from your own ruling Princes* and your religious leaders also to eat horse-flesh in this dire emergency. 5135† of you now see their duty plain and clear, and are already eating horse-flesh to preserve their health and strength.

" As General Officer Commanding this Force I wish it to be clearly understood that I shall replace all non-meat eaters, who become too feeble to do their duty efficiently as officers or non-commissioned officers, by other men who eat meat and remain strong.

" In the case of all officers and men who fail in their duty to the State, I shall cause a list of their names to be prepared, and lay those names before the Government of India for such action as Government may think fit.

Kut-al-Amara. C. V. F. TOWNSHEND,
12th April, 1916. Major-General."

Copy of report, dated 12th April, 1916, from the A.D.M.S. to me :—

" The Indian troops and followers are now in a state of semi-starvation. The reduction of the grain ration to five ounces per man, which has of necessity been commenced, will, during the course of the ensuing week or ten days, reduce them to a state of great debility and emaciation, and very seriously militate against their utility as a defence force. In expressing this opinion I would lay stress on the fact that the quantity of grain mentioned forms their entire ration.

* A considerable number of our Indian soldiers had been enlisted in the independent states of India.

† This included followers.

"I consider that the universal use of horse-flesh by Indians would materially keep down the death and sickness rates, ameliorate a vast amount of human suffering, assist in preventing the progress of the effects of starvation, and maintain a large share in such a physical state as will enable them to carry on their garrison duties."

The threat to promote others in the place of those Indian officers and N.C.O.'s who refused to eat horse-meat, and the actual fulfilment of it in one or two cases, had a good effect, for by nightfall 7,054 Indians (soldiers and followers) were eating horse-flesh. Some still refused. Two days later 9,329 Indians were eating horse meat.

On 13th April, at 6.55 a.m., very heavy fire was heard on the right bank in the direction of Beit Aiessa. I supposed it was Gorringe's force making headway towards that locality. At 7.15 a.m. I opened fire with 5-inch guns, hindering the passage of a considerable number of Turkish troops from the left to the right bank.

On this day Gorringe wired to say that he had been obliged to postpone operations in order to let the ground dry after heavy rain. The floods, the rains, all the elements worked against us now as they had done in Aylmer's time.

On the same date I received from G.H.Q. some details of the first fighting of the Relief Force from Head Quarters: "The Turks cleared from El Hannah on the night of 4th-5th April, leaving a rearguard to oppose our advance. On the morning of the 5th Felahieh was held by three battalions with machine-guns, two of which were taken on the night of the 5th-6th, with the position. Sannaiyat was very strongly held and attempts by the Seventh Division to take it on the morning of the 9th, were, as you know, unsuccessful. These attempts, owing to the shortness of time available, were made without a close preliminary approach and consolidation. Systematic approach to this position is necessarily slow, as the ground is water-logged and moonlight nights force the approach to be chiefly by sapping. The Army Commander has decided with Gorringe on another and quicker plan of operations, which is being put into effect. Gorringe will certainly inform you when your co-operation is possible. Casualties in troops up to yesterday morning are estimated at 5,000, of which about half have already been made good by reinforcements. The balance should also be made good within the next few days."

I saw by this telegram that I had been right in my supposition that El Hannah and Felahieh were only temporary positions, lightly held.

On 14th April I wired to Headquarters, repeating to Corps:—"By making the emergency ration last two days instead of one I can hold out till 24th April. Beyond that date we shall be dependent on food by the air service, except horse-

meat, which will last till 29th. I hope this air-service food supply will commence as soon as possible, so as to accumulate food before 23rd, as it must be remembered there will be inhabitants to feed as well as troops. By reducing rations now to four ounces I could save food for 24th April. If you think this is necessary let me know, but you will understand such a course—namely, reducing to four ounces of meal, which in reality means only three ounces of actual food—will result in increase of deaths. 9,239 Indians, including Gurkhas and followers, are eating horse-meat. This leaves 1,500 Indians who are abstaining from same; this 1,500 includes sick and wounded Indians in hospital."

I asked also what Admiral Wemyss thought of running the gauntlet. If a steamer could tow up two barges against stream in time to get to Kut, slip barges and get back again during darkness, I did not think the Turks would hit the moving target. "Melliss tells me his Nasiriyeh experiences in this respect, and I have my own Kurna experiences in this direction."

I asked if they could let me know to what date they wanted me to hold out. I said that I did not want to hustle Gorringe, but I felt uneasy when I heard of his digging in. The air-service food supply seemed the proper remedy, but it should be begun quickly. I added that as Head Quarters and Gorringe both knew how much food I had and the weak state of my Indian troops, they must expect no weight in my co-operation. It is the history of all sieges, I added.

I received a telegram from Corps saying that owing to the weather they had not been able to send aeroplanes with supplies but that they would be sent as soon as opportunity offered. The weather and floods continued to hamper their preparations for further advance. The work on the roads through the marsh was going on as satisfactorily as the weather permitted. According to their information the Turks were experiencing great difficulty in supplying themselves on the left bank owing to the extension of the Suwada marsh and floods to the north of Kut. They were said in consequence to be crossing over supplies from the right bank. A flood therefore would add considerably to their difficulties. There was not much comfort in that telegram. The expedient of running the blockade by a ship, Head Quarters informed me, would only be resorted to in the last extremity, but they were making preliminary preparations and a ship was being held in readiness.

On 14th April the grain in possession of the town Arabs was finished; the Military Governor, however, said he could feed them on donkeys and ponies of the town for another eight days. He had also organised a soup kitchen for Arab women and children. I increased the strength of the picquets in the town, as I expected trouble from the Arab population, now that food had almost run out.

I sent the following telegram to the Government of India on 15th April :—

" *Re* all Indian troops of my force eating horse-flesh, I want all collectors of districts and political officers or residents of native states warned to summon *panchayats* in the districts of the classes enlisted* and to explain to them that permission was obtained from their religious leaders, Moulvis, Pandits, and Maharajah of Kioapur to eat horse-flesh, and that therefore no person will dare to cast a stone at them for their noble devotion to Government in this matter under pain of being proceeded against by Government. I also trust Government will be liberal in granting *jagirs* to Indian officers of this force who have helped Government in this dire extremity."

I considered it necessary to send this telegram, as the Indian officers and soldiers were undoubtedly greatly prejudiced against eating horse-meat. As they said : " The fact will always be thrown in our teeth in our villages, and we shall not be able to marry our daughters "—which anyone acquainted with Indian caste prejudices will readily understand.

I received a telegram from Corps that the 3rd Division had captured at dawn the enemy's trenches on the line 18 C.0.6 to 18 C.0.9, and was continuing to gain ground against the enemy's Beit Aiessa trenches, which were connected with the Chahela works. The telegram finished with the usual comforting intelligence about the food supply by aeroplanes : " Loaded aeroplanes have been unable to rise owing to wind, but they will be despatched with supplies as soon as possible."

On 16th April I sent the following telegram to the Army Commander : " Secret. Personal. May I have an answer to my proposal in my telegram of 10th April, *re* the *Sumana* running the blockade with six or seven hundred of the most useful men to the state? I want to know if Government thinks I should break out with that party or remain behind with the bulk of the Division and sick and wounded to go into captivity. There is no precedent to go on except that the Commander of a besieged garrison plays the correct *rôle* when he tries to break out, and this attempt at running the blockade would be a most hazardous one. To break out with the bulk of my force is, as I have explained before, with an impassable swift river of five hundred yards' breadth on three sides, and on the one land side a lake with submerged trenches and network of trenches beyond manned by the Turks, utterly impossible. My second in command, Sir Charles Melliss, volunteers to stay behind.

" I have every hope that the Relief Force will ram its way through, but after what has happened before I think it will be

* viz., Rajputs of Rajputana, Rajputs of the United Provinces, Dogras, Mahrattas, Jats, Sikhs, Gujars and Punjabi Hindus.

a close thing, and I am anxious about food business. Everything should be understood, as there will be no time at the end."

I might have added that if there were no flood like a lake on the only land side, and if it were dry ground, even my British soldiers had not strength left to march as far as the Turkish trenches, carrying ammunition and great-coats—to say nothing of the Indians. It was impossible to put men on fatigue work, and soldiers fainted on sentry-go.

The reason why I asked if Government thought I should personally head this attempt to break out by running the gauntlet in the *Sumana* gunboat was that I felt it might be said I had left all my command to be taken—in other words, that I had abandoned them. Though the attempt by the gunboat would have been almost certain death, for we suspected then, and now know, that there was a chain across the river. If the conditions by land had permitted a sortie in force to cut our way out, there was, of course, no question as to what was my proper course. I should have commenced the sortie. But to attempt a break-out with seven hundred men on a steamer, leaving some eight thousand fighting-men behind in Kut, was a different matter, and I know no parallel case in history. Naturally I wanted an opinion from Head Quarters. On the one hand if I broke out and escaped without being killed or wounded I might be of further use to the State ; on the other hand there was captivity before me.

The aeroplanes began their food service this day, and in ideal weather and perfect conditions they put 3,350 lbs. of supplies into Kut instead of the stipulated 5,000 lbs. On 16th April up to 5 p.m. they had only put 1,333 lbs. instead of 5,000 lbs. Two bags also were dropped into the river, although there was an enormous mark chalked out on the ground as a guide.

Accordingly, on 16th April, I wired to Corps and repeated it to H.Q. : " This puts a new light on the question. If they cannot put in 5,000 lbs. a day, I see nothing for it but that a steamer should run the blockade with say fifty tons of supplies, which would give a reserve of twelve days' food at an eight-ounce ration, including town people. At once, on seeing that the aeroplanes could put nothing like 5,000 lbs. a day into the town I reduced my ration of meal to four ounces, which when cleaned meant only three ounces of food. Seven bags of rupees have been sent, but food must come first."

I added that the Turks must know now that food is being put into Kut by air, and they might turn their minds to possible blockade-running by food steamers and block the river channel by booms.

On 16th April Gorringe reported that he had rushed some Turkish picquets during the night, taking 43 prisoners and inflicting considerable loss.

The following prices at the auction of a dead officer's kit in Kut are instructive reading :—

A box of 100 cigarettes fetched 100 rupees ; a small pair of inferior binoculars, 250 ; Arab tobacco, 48 rupees a pound—it is worth perhaps two shillings.

I paid 30 rupees for an ordinary three-shilling tin of kerosene oil. Chickens were 10 rupees each.

On 1st March I was buying wheat at 112 rupees the maund, and barley at 56 rupees the maund.

On 17th April (Monday) 5,000 bayonets reached the Corps as reinforcements, and 1,250 more were *en route* by river steamers. The Corps composing the Tigris force now numbered 29,000 bayonets, 1,500 sabres and 133 guns.

The Indian troops at Kut were now very dejected, and there were desertions or attempted desertions every night. We had to shoot more of them. On this day three men of the 22nd Punjabis were made an example of ; they had attempted to desert by running from our trenches towards the enemy.

Very heavy gun-fire was heard on the morning of 17th April. This proved to be 3rd Division driving the enemy out of the Beit Aiessa trenches, where they took a machine-gun and about 100 prisoners. Large numbers of the enemy, Corps reported, fell back from Beit Aiessa to Chahela Mounds. Gorringe added in his wire that by taking Beit Aiessa he got control of a number of water-cuts down stream of that locality, by means of which the Turks had been flooding much of the country to the east and south-east as far as the Umm-al-Brahm. The ground was now drying well.

In the morning I received a wire from Head Quarters : " In the event of relief in time proving impracticable and should the attempt to run supplies to you fail, Army Commander is prepared to sanction the proposal contained in your telegram of 10th instant—namely that *Sumana* shall try to run the blockade, taking as many officers and other ranks as possible whose services are of most use to the State.

" Army Commander, however, makes this one exception, that he considers you yourself bound to remain behind in command of the garrison, though he would deeply regret loss of your services. In other respects he leaves the composition of the party entirely to you. It is obvious that should so much as a whisper of this project get about it would have the worst possible effect on the Indian troops.

" As stated above, the project is not to be put into effect except in the last extremity, and then only on receipt of a direct order from the Army Commander."

Head Quarters also wired that the expedient of running the blockade would only be adopted as a last extremity. The Navy had only taken it on under this condition, and that state

of affairs had by no means been reached. I answered this on the following day: "Quite so—but as your air service from afternoon of 15th April up to evening 17th April have only put in 5,000 lbs. supplies instead of 10,000 as promised you can understand my grave anxiety. I must again emphasize the fact that including town people I have close on 20,000 mouths to feed, which at four ounces a head means 5,000 lbs. a day. I have cut down meal ration to troops to four ounces, and my meal, bread stuff, and biscuits will be exhausted by the 25th, not including, of course, our air service deliveries."

A telegram from Head Quarters repeated the news of the taking of Beit Aiessa by the 3rd Division with small loss; 2,300 Turks were found dead in the trenches, 180 prisoners, including eight Turkish officers, were taken, with two field-guns and five machine-guns. But the Turks had heavily counter-attacked during the night. Our line had been driven back from five to eight hundred yards. The 13th British Division had been brought from the other bank of the river in support, and our line was to be carried forward again after re-organisation of the brigades, which had become much mixed up. Further details were wired me later in the day, by which I learnt that the Turks started their heavy counter-attacks at 9 p.m. with 10,000 men of the 2nd Turkish Division, part of the 35th, and one battalion of the 45th Division. They came on in dense masses, as in their night attack on me at Ctesiphon. They had lost very heavily, 1,200 to 1,500 dead had been counted within five hundred yards of the 8th Brigade trenches. The losses in front of the 7th and 9th Brigades of the 3rd Division were known to be heavy, and the trenches were blocked with dead. Our casualties in the 8th Brigade were fairly slight, but the 7th and 9th Brigades lost heavily. In some places the Turks attacked twelve times and got within twenty yards of our lines. Gorringe estimated the Turkish loss as 4,000 in killed alone. They were led by German officers, some of whom were among the killed. The 13th Division was now moving forward to attack the left of the enemy's trenches at Chahela. Gorringe appeared to have two divisions on the right bank and one on the left.

The aeroplanes suffered from engine trouble on 17th April, and it was too stormy for them to bring us food on the 18th; the stormy weather, the rain, the floods, and the mud, all in turn assisted the Turk to keep Kut in his clutch. My anxiety now regarding food was intense, for it was patent to all of us that the air food-supply service was a hopeless failure. When the weather was at all stormy they could not operate, and when it was fine they were effectively attacked by the German monoplane, or else they had engine trouble.

On 20th April this telegram from Army Commander was received at 8.5 a.m.:—"You can assure all ranks from me that

their relief will be effected shortly. They must not relax their gallant efforts during the next few days, and I am quite sure that you will continue to inspire them by your courageous example."

This I published as a *communiqué* to the troops.

Gorringe had slightly advanced his line on the right bank, but I noticed that he had not got Chahela Mounds.

On 22nd April (Saturday) a very heavy bombardment was heard down river from 10 to 11 a.m. I wired to Head Quarters for news. My force was now terribly anxious, and I myself had been rendered weak by a sort of ague I could not shake off.

The first aeroplane which came over that morning (at 8 a.m.) dropped four packets all into the river near the mouth of the Hai. The second dropped another package into the river east of Kut town. I had had to report the air service several times for dropping bags of parcels and letters into the river; but four hundred pounds of food thrown into the river in a morning was a most serious loss to me!

A telegram from Head Quarters brings this chapter to an end :—

"22nd April, 7.50 p.m. Much regret that the attack on Sannaiyat position this morning was repulsed. Gorringe, however, will not relax efforts."

CHAPTER XVIII

THE SURRENDER OF KUT

THERE is very little left to say. It will be understood that the actual negotiations for the surrender must be kept secret. I wired to Head Quarters on 23rd April:—

"We must face the situation, namely that Gorringe with 30,000 men and 133 guns has been repulsed a second time, and I must suppose with heavy loss. We are now at 23rd April, my extreme limit of resistance is 29th, and Gorringe is not even at Sannaiyat. Therefore short of a miracle he cannot relieve me."

I was of the opinion that the Army Commander should negotiate with Khalil Pacha on the ground of free withdrawal for my force, Kut being given up to the Turks. These would be perfectly honourable terms. I referred him to former correspondence on this subject. Khalil Pacha, I said, would probably insist on the force being paroled, in which case the Army Commander should try to get it paroled not to fight against the Turks only. If Gorringe was not strong enough in the next two or three days to unite his Principal Mass and with it strike at the enemy's weakest point and run through, I thought the Army Commander should make up his mind to negotiate at once on the above lines.

Such was the state of the weakness of the troops that men fainted on sentry duty and could not work at any fatigue. It was pitiful to see all this. Personally, having a very strong constitution, I had kept well all through, except for feverish ague in the last few days, owing to the floods, I suppose. This, however, had not put me on the sick list. The garrison was now absolutely done. Men were dying at an average rate of fifteen a day, dysentery and scurvy claiming many victims.

On the night of 24th-25th April the *Julnar*, which was to run the blockade with food for us, left the Relief Force at midnight. Anxiously I waited on the roof of Head Quarters House with Colonel Parr, my G.S.O., I. The *Julnar* got as far as Magasis Ferry. At midnight we heard a terrific musketry fire here, and saw the flashes of guns and musketry. It lasted for half an hour; then all was silent. At 6.0 in the morning I could see the *Julnar* lying alongside the right bank of the river.

Thus the attempt to run the blockade had failed. I wired to Head Quarters my heartfelt sympathy with Admiral Wemyss for the heroic effort of his brave bluejackets.

The *Julnar* had a crew from the Royal Navy under Lieutenant Firman, R.N., assisted by Lieutenant-Commander Cowley, R.N.V.R., the brave and skilful commander of the Lynch steamer *Mejidieh*, often mentioned in this account of the operations in Mesopotamia, who had in that capacity rendered splendid service throughout the campaign. She carried 270 tons of supplies on board. She was discovered soon after leaving Felahieh, and was shelled most of the way. On reaching Magasis, the chain the Turks had stretched across the river—so we learnt afterwards from the enemy—fouled her screw, and, under a terrific fire of musketry, she was diverted into the bank. Cowley, I was told, was wounded on the bridge. Lieutenant Firman was killed, and the crew, including five wounded, were made prisoners. Cowley is supposed to have died of his wounds, though there were rumours afterwards that the Turks had shot him.

On 25th April, the Army Commander replied to my wire of the 23rd that he had asked permission of Government to negotiate on the lines I suggested. He was of the opinion that I should negotiate myself. "It is for consideration whether, if Government sanctions the opening of negotiations, you yourself will not be in a position to get better terms than any emissary of ours. You would, of course, be ordered by the Army Commander to open negotiations for surrender, the onus not lying with yourself. You are in the position of having conducted a gallant and successful defence." He mentioned that Admiral Wemyss, who had been consulted by him on the subject, considered that " With your prestige you are likely to get the best terms. We could, of course, supply food as you might arrange. Please wire your views."

I replied at once that I would do whatever the Army Commander considered the best course for the public service. If he ordered me to open negotiations I should meet Khalil Pacha and suggest a six days' armistice for discussion of terms and to allow food to come up, with none of the forces engaged allowed to move from their present positions or lines of defence.

The result was that, much against my will, on 26th April, I had to negotiate with Khalil Pacha, knowing that I had not a biscuit up my sleeve to argue with, and knowing that Khalil Pacha knew I was *in extremis* for food. Twenty men were now dying daily of starvation. I was of the opinion that the G.O.C. Relief Force was the proper person to negotiate. He could menace, and he had the power to resume hostilities. Had I had any food I would have absolutely declined to negotiate, on the ground that it was not my business. But I had to get food at once or all my men would lie down and die.

The following telegram from the Commander-in-Chief in India was received through the Army Commander: " The Commander-in-Chief desires to express to the troops under

Gorringe and Townshend his appreciation of their gallant efforts and their tenacious endurance in the face of a brave and determined enemy, and under exceptional physical difficulties. He knows that they will respond to the next call of their leaders in the same spirit, and he looks forward to hearing that success will finally crown their endeavour. Special for Townshend :—The Commander-in-Chief desires you to convey to Townshend and his brave and devoted troops his appreciation of the manner in which they have undergone the sufferings and hardships of the siege, which he knows has been due to the high spirit of devotion to duty in which they met this call of their Sovereign and Empire."

On 26th April I received an answer from Khalil Pacha. We both embarked in steam-launches and met on the river near the right flank of the Turkish entrenchments on the left bank.

Although he spoke in enthusiastic terms of the defence, which, he said, was heroic, and on a par with Osman Pacha's defence of Plevna, Khalil, instructed by Enver Pacha, insisted on unconditional surrender. He knew the state of my troops. He knew I had no food left. He knew that the men were dying, and that disease and scurvy were rife. Before any food was allowed in Kut we must march out into camp, and Khalil Pacha would confirm my telegram with Enver Pacha as to paroling my force.

After much negotiation all conditions were refused by Enver Pacha. My own personal liberty was offered on condition that I did not destroy my guns and material. Such conditions, of course, were impossible to accept. Finally, on 29th April, I destroyed my guns and all material, ammunition, etc., including the wireless installation. A Turkish battalion marched into the town and took over the guards.

Khalil Pacha came to see me, and I offered him my sabre and pistols. He refused to take them, saying, " They are as much yours as ever they were."

Khalil told me that I should be sent to Constantinople and treated with the same honour as Osman Pacha, with whose defence of Plevna the Turks compared mine of Kut. He said I should be the honoured guest of the Turkish nation. My force would be sent to Asia Minor to be interned in places in a good climate near the sea.

The Turkish Government was determined to show the British force captured to the world, as it were, partly as a national triumph, and partly as a *revanche* for the taking of Erzroum by the Russians. German Staff officers were there to see that the utmost humiliation was inflicted—as they had inflicted them on the French in 1870, in the cruel and humiliating conditions of surrender. I have always ascribed their utter neglect of all traditions of chivalry in war to revenge for their

own disgraceful surrenders of fortresses and forces in Prussia in 1806, after their defeat at Jena, when great fortresses, garrisoned by thousands of troops, surrendered to the summons of handfuls of dragoons—and the famous Blücher himself, with 14,000 men, surrendered Lübeck after a defence of a few hours.

There lies no dishonour for a commander and his troops, when they have done their duty according to military laws, if the enemy imposes the hardest of conditions upon them. They are not the masters to fix and determine those conditions. In our case at Kut we had resisted for just on five months, and we were compelled to surrender not by the enemy but by famine. No terms can ever be expected when the enemy knows you have no more food left to argue with, and it will have been seen that I forewarned the Commander-in-Chief in Mesopotamia of this.

No! It depends whether your enemy is generous and chivalrous or the reverse whether you get honourable terms for a brave defence—terms such as the chivalrous Austrian General Melas granted to Massèna at Genoa, in 1800. The enemy's Commander-in-Chief, in short, must be a gentleman.

Conquered by famine, we had to submit and constitute ourselves prisoners. At different epochs in history, brave troops—commanded by generals like Massèna, Davoust, St. Cyr, Kléber—have experienced the same fate, which leaves no stain on military honour.

I trust history will say that we did our duty as Englishmen and soldiers up to the extreme limit of human nature. All that it was possible to do, to avoid this termination to our defence, was done. I have tried to show that it was impossible, without a miracle, much as I longed and longed, to make a supreme effort to break through the enemy's lines, fortified as they were by an impassable river and by floods. As soon as I discovered that the enemy insisted on capitulation I blew up my guns, destroyed all munitions and material of war, cut up harness, saddlery, and all equipment, and at the last moment had the bolts of the rifles thrown into the river.

It seems to me that I cannot better end the story of the defence of Kut than by quoting the speech of Lord Kitchener, then Minister for War, in the House of Lords, on May 4th, 1916, —perhaps the last occasion that he spoke in public. He quoted my last message before hoisting the white flag over Kut and burning the tattered Union Jack, which we had kept flying for just on five months, with my own hands, so that it might not fall into those of the enemy :—

> " Lord Beresford asked the Secretary of State for War how many British prisoners were taken at the surrender

of Kut, and whether it was a fact that the Turkish Commander-in-Chief was so impressed by the heroic defence made by General Townshend that he granted him the honours of war by allowing him to retain his sword.

"Earl Kitchener : 'I am glad that the noble and gallant lord has offered me this opportunity of paying a tribute to General Townshend and his troops, whose dogged determination and splendid courage have earned for them so honourable a record. It is well-known how, after a series of brilliantly-fought engagements, General Townshend decided to hold the strategically important position at Kut-al-Amara, and it will not be forgotten that his dispositions for the defences of that place were so excellent and so complete that the enemy, notwithstanding large numerical superiority, was wholly unable to penetrate his lines. Noble lords will not fail to realise how tense was the strain borne by those troops who, for more than twenty weeks, held to their posts under conditions of abnormal climatic difficulty, and on rations calculated for protraction to the furthest possible period until, as it was proved, imminent starvation itself compelled the capitulation of this gallant garrison, which consisted of 2,970 British and some 6,000 Indian troops, including followers.

"'General Townshend and his troops, in their honourable captivity, will have the satisfaction of knowing that, in the opinion of their comrades, which I think I may say that this House and the country fully share, they did all that was humanly possible to resist to the last, and that their surrender reflects no discredit on themselves or on the record of the British and Indian Armies.

"'Every effort was, of course, made to relieve the beleaguered force, and I am not travelling beyond the actual facts in saying that to the adverse elements alone was due the denial of success ; the constant rain and consequent floods not only impeding the advance, but compelling—in lieu of turning movements—direct attacks on an almost impossibly narrow front. No praise would seem extravagant for the troops under Sir Percy Lake and Sir George Gorringe, and that they did not reap the fruit of their courage and devotion is solely due to the circumstances which fought against them. The last message sent by General Townshend from Kut was addressed in these terms :—

"' "We are pleased to know that we have done our duty, and recognise that our situation is one of the fortunes of war. We thank you and General Gorringe and all ranks

of the Tigris force for the great efforts you have made to save us."

"'I think the House, no less than the country at large, will endorse these words, and I am sure that those who held and those who strained every nerve to relieve Kut have alike earned our admiration and our gratitude. I am glad to endorse what the noble lord has said in regard to the conduct of the Turkish Commander.'

"Lord Grenfell said the eulogy of General Townshend which had been pronounced would be very satisfactory to the House and to the Army, including the force which remained in Mesopotamia. In spite of difficulties of various kinds, sickness, want of food, and lack of medical stores, General Townshend and the Anglo-Indian force held Kut in the most admirable manner until, the food supplies being exhausted, to save the lives of his men, General Townshend consented to capitulate. The defence of Kut by General Townshend and the determination of his troops would long be remembered with great admiration by the Army and the country." From *The Times*, May 5th, 1916.

Of that speech, which I did not read till I reached Constantinople, when I found it at the American Embassy, my command and I may well be proud. It showed that our beloved England considered we had done our duty. To me personally there was the additional sentiment that such praise came from an old commander, with whom and under whom I had served in the wars in the Sudan, and to whom I owed my promotion, first to Lieutenant-Colonel, then to Brigadier-General, and finally to Major-General.

I also include here letters of condolence, addressed to my wife by Colonel Fitzgerald and General Sir James Wolfe Murray.

"York House,
St. James's.
4th May, 1916.

"Dear Mrs. Townshend,

Lord Kitchener asks me to tell you how much he feels for you in your trouble, but that you must realise how splendidly your husband has done, in the great stand he made at Kut. He is paying a tribute to him in a statement he is making to-day in the House of Lords.

"Please accept also my own small tribute of admiration for what he has done. When the story comes to be told people will realise, and it will go down to history as a wonderful achievement.

" If I can assist you in communicating with him in any way please let me know.

Yours sincerely,
O. FITZGERALD."*

" Hotel Vandyke,
Cromwell Road,
Queen's Gate, S.W.
30th April, 1916.

" Dear Mrs. Townshend,

At length the end has come ; and your husband and his brave troops have had to succumb to their hard fate. They and he have covered themselves with glory, and have done their duty as everyone who knows him knew they would do, to the last, under his leadership. It is not for me either to impute blame, or to give praise ; but I feel sure that the latter will be universal for your husband's conduct throughout all the course of the operations.

" But while the thoughts of all his countrymen and countrywomen will be with him and his men, let one just say how much the thoughts of many of us have been with you, in all this anxious, wearying time : for you all this terrible suspense has been especially trying ; and we—who know you—have admired the brave face with which you have borne your trial, and have—like him—kept your end up to the last.

" Thank God he comes out with honour and with life ; and let us hope that his enemy will render the same homage to a gallant soldier, who has fought it out against them till further resistance became impracticable, as all his countrymen do, and treat him honourably till we get him back amongst us once more.

Yours sincerely,
J. WOLFE MURRAY."†

I was to proceed to Constantinople, Khalil Pacha informed me. He put a Thornycroft launch at my disposal to take me from Kut-al-Amara to Baghdad, the first stage in the long journey through Mesopotamia and Asia Minor to reach Europe. Accompanied by Colonel Isàkh Bey, Colonel Parr, and Captain Morland, I went on board, and, as we passed the place where the remnant of the gallant old Sixth Division was encamped, officers and men lined the bank and cheered me long as I went by. Tears filled my eyes as I stood at attention at the salute. Never shall I have such a command again. Never had any

* Colonel FitzGerald, Military Secretary to Lord Kitchener, went down in H.M.S. *Hampshire*.
† General Sir James Wolfe Murray died in October, 1919.

man a finer command. I loved the Sixth Division with all my heart, and they gave me their confidence to the last.

The last message I received by wireless before destroying the station was the following, from the officers and men of the Royal Navy and Relief Force who had formerly been under my command in the Mesopotamian campaign :—

"General Townshend. 29th April, 1916.

We, the Officers and men of the Royal Navy, who have been associated with the Tigris Corps, and have, many of us, so often worked with you and your gallant troops, desire to express our heartfelt regret at our inability to join hands with you and your comrades in Kut."

Finally, I asked Khalil Pacha to send my faithful fox-terrier "Spot" down to the British force to my friend, Sir Wilfred Peek, so that he might reach home. He had served me faithfully. He was with me in the Battles of Kurna and Kut-al-Amara, he was at Ctesiphon and in the retreat, and he killed many cats during the defence of Kut. He reached England safely, and I met him again on my return to my home in Norfolk.

APPENDIX PART IV

Head Quarters, 6th Division,
December 16th, 1915.

PLAN OF ACTION IN THE EVENT OF THE TURKS MAKING AN ASSAULT.

(To be communicated to the troops.)

The general principles which have guided the G.O.C. Division in the distribution of the troops are similar to those which govern the distribution of a force which awaits attack and is enframed by other troops in a line of battle. The defence is distributed in depth in its position, with good covered communications behind it, for concealment and cover from fire are vitally important factors in defensive operations.

The troops are divided into two main portions, one known as the **general reserve**, to be held in readiness for the offensive on fitting opportunity, and the other portion **defends the position.**

The artillery is posted so as to command the enemy's lines of approach and their probable gun positions.

The infantry allotted to the defence of the position is divided into the firing line with supports and a local reserve.

When the position is extensive, as in this case, it is divided into sections, each of which has been assigned to a distinct unit.

Thus one Infantry Brigade holds the left section of the **Main line of defence**, and one holds the right section. The **General Reserve** of one Brigade has been placed in rear of that portion of the position which, from the general situation and nature of the ground, offers the best line for the eventual advance.

In the event then of the enemy making an assault, the G.O.C. Division intends holding the **main line of defence,** i.e., the front line running from the fort along old line of Block-houses, and will reinforce this line by the General Reserve. **The main line of defence must be held at all costs.** The enemy are only now some 10,000 men, of whom 1,500 are on the right bank of the river, he having lost very heavily on the night of the 12th December ; we have some 9,000 fighting men—thus it must be impressed on the troops that if we attack them in the open now we should beat them well, as we are much the better at open fighting, as we have now proved in many fights. Therefore the G.O.C. Division has no fear of the result if the Turks make an assault—let them try it. Only it is absolutely requisite that for him to be able to push up the troops of **the General Reserve, good ways of communication must be made at once** and arranged so as they can be fired from. This is the most vitally important work of all, and all other work must now be ceased until these ways of approach are made.

C. V. F. TOWNSHEND,
Major-General,
Commanding the Force at Kut.*

* It will be seen that I had exaggerated my own strength by a thousand men. I did this partly to encourage the rank and file, and partly on the principle that when one is induced to speak of one's own forces in *communiqués*, etc., which may find their way into the hands of the enemy, one should exaggerate one's numbers. I acted on the same principle in my battle orders to the troops for the Battles of Kut-al-Amara and Ctesiphon, in which I purposely minimised the numbers of the enemy, in order not to shake the confidence of my troops.

GENERAL AYLMER'S APPRECIATION OF THE SITUATION ON 16TH DECEMBER, 1916.

He estimated the enemy's forces, round me at Kut and below Kut on the Tigris, at 17,000 men and 54 guns. The enemy's impending reinforcements might be the 5th Division, of 7,000 men and 9 guns, which might reach Kut by 1st January; it was possible that the Euphrates Division (26th Division), of 7,000 men and 24 guns, lately reported at Feluja, would put in an early appearance. These two divisions could arrive at Kut before any relief force.

The 36th and 37th Divisions, with 44 guns, might arrive at Kut between 20th and 27th January, i.e., before the whole Tigris Corps united under Aylmer could do so, but *after* a smaller relief force of one strong division could reach Kut.

"Very serious factors in the situation are the wastage of British officers and reported diminishing *moral* of Indian troops in Townshend's force; the arrival of the 5th Division and possibly the Euphrates Division on or before 1st January will bring great extra strain on him."

A Russian advance on Baghdad from Kermanshah direct, if the enemy is vigorously pushed, might draw away a part of the reinforcing divisions, but Aylmer did not rely on that. (Nor did I.)

"Taking the above factors into consideration I think it would be hazardous to rely on Townshend holding out till 15th January, and that it would be most advisable to anticipate that date and to attempt to relieve him by 10th January if possible. This would forestall two of the relieving disivions."

Relieving Force. General Aylmer estimated that the Meerut Division, Cavalry Brigade, and one extra infantry brigade, with some extra artillery, could be concentrated at Ali-al-Gharbi about 3rd January. The assembly of the 3rd (Lahore) and 7th (Meerut) Divisions, ready to advance together, would probably take three weeks longer. The total numbers of the *smaller* relieving force, assisted by my force at Kut, were estimated at 27,000 men, with 87 guns, about one-third of which would be inferior troops who have suffered heavily. If Aylmer carried out the relief of Kut with the whole of the Tigris Corps united, he would have to reckon on an additional 16,000 Turks with 44 guns.

The above appreciation, he said, took no account of the Arabs, of whom 5,000 might be under arms. "Townshend's small-arm ammunition seems sufficient to last six weeks. Gun ammunition on the whole sufficient to last three to four weeks, but he is short of howitzer ammunition, which in such operations is a serious matter. He has now some 7,800 fit men using rifles; his net daily average loss of men firing rifles since investment began is approximately 75. At this rate his number of rifles will be reduced by 1,200 by 1st January and 2,400 by 15th January.

"It is, of course, infinitely preferable that the whole corps should advance to the relief together at one time, as our strength would probably carry us through to Baghdad without serious check after our successful battle.

"On the other hand, if relief of Kut is carried out by smaller relief force, i.e., only the Meerut Division, one extra brigade, and Cavalry Brigade, it will delay the arrival of the whole of the Tigris Corps owing to a large amount of transport accompanying relief force. We should be too weak to take Baghdad with the smaller relief force and would have to halt to await the delayed arrival of remainder of the Tigris Corps. The Turks would certainly reform and oppose us again in a stronger position, or possibly assume the offensive. The essential point, however, is to ensure timely relief of Townshend, as any reverse to him would have most serious political effects, not only in this country, but in India."

General Aylmer summed up that he was strongly of the opinion that he should move forward from Ali-al-Gharbi to relieve me on 3rd January with the troops at present with him, i.e., Meerut Division, extra Infantry Brigade and Cavalry Brigade, even if this did delay the arrival at the front of the larger force. He considered a strong division and cavalry brigade should be sufficient to relieve Kut.

Comments on the above appreciation.

The great fundamental principle of Economy of Force demanded that Aylmer should unite all his available forces in his hand before advancing; and to advance before uniting one's forces means violation of Economy of Force, which in history invariably means disaster or defeat. It is true that the business of a relief force is to raise a siege and not protract it, and Aylmer had shown that he decided to disregard the principle of Economy of Force for that very reason. It will be remembered that Kuropatkin protested at advancing from Harbin before he had united all his forces in his hand, when he would guarantee to sweep the Japanese from Manchuria, but the Minister of War overruled him and said that Port Arthur must be relieved at all costs. The result was naturally the disaster of Wafangon. Port Arthur, however, was a fortress of the greatest strength, with a garrison of 35,000 men, and so could look after itself; on the other hand, at Kut, I was in a wretched, flimsy, entrenched camp, with a shattered little force, the *moral* of the bulk of it shaken, and I feared the result of a determined assault on the part of the Turks. In addition I was not happy in my mind at the knowledge that entrenched camps in military history are bound up with the final surrender of the force which has sought shelter in this way; only the urgent strategical necessity of holding up the advance of the 6th Turkish Army until British reinforcements could arrive and unite for battle had decided me to take the risk of entrenching a camp at Kut and being immediately invested. Naturally I was anxious for relief now that British forces were actually in Mesopotamia, and it was natural that I should keep asking for it. Although the advance of a part of our relief force before all of it was united was a violation of Economy of Force, still the enemy were doing the same. The Turkish 6th Army had been pushed on Kut in packets. Thus it may well be argued that Aylmer was right to attempt to relieve me as soon as possible, given that the fall of my force would have a disastrous effect in India, and he was right in taking the most essential point, i.e., the immediate relief of my force, as the most important objective. However, it will be seen in a telegram to me on 1st January that he says that, though he would greatly prefer to make a start from Ali-al-Gharbi for my relief with one division on 3rd January, by far the best plan from the point of view of the relieving force would be to advance all together from Sheikh Saad as a combined corps. In my answer, on the same date, I not only agreed, but urged it on the grounds of Economy of Force.

Secret. Head Quarters, 6th Division,
December 29th, 1915.

CONFIDENTIAL SCHEME FOR WITHDRAWAL TO AND OCCUPATION OF MIDDLE LINE IF SUCH BECOMES NECESSARY.

(This cancels No. 256-G, dated 22nd December, 1915—" Confidential Scheme for withdrawal to and occupation of 2nd Line.")

Copies to Brigade Commanders and D.E.C. only. They should give confidential instructions to commanders of units—who should send representatives to identify the various billets and locations which they will occupy in case of withdrawal. The whole matter to be *kept absolutely secret*, there being no immediate intention of any such withdrawal. All details of this scheme to be worked out by G.O.C. General Reserve in communication with commanders of first-line troops.

Troops available. 1. The troops available for defence of main line are at present as follows:—

N.E. Section.	4 battalions; one Co. Sirmur Sappers; Maxim Gun Battery; Detachment Volunteer R.A.
N.W. Section.	4 battalions.
General Reserve.	5 battalions.

Normal distribution by day. 2. Normal distribution of above by day :—

N.E. Section.	3 battalions in Fort. 1 battalion in trenches. 3 picquets on river bank.
N.W. Section.	4 battalions in main line trenches.
General Reserve.	5 battalions, † in bivouacs "A," "B," "C," "E," "F."
Additional.	48th Pioneers in "D" bivouac, 17 and 22 Cos. Sappers and Miners.

By night. N.E. and N.W. Section as above :—

General Reserve.
(*a*) One battalion in close reserve at point "P."
(*b*) One battalion after relief from firing line at "K" till dawn.
(*c*) One battalion in close reserve at "H" till dawn.
(*d*) Two battalions in bivouac.
Additional to sleep in 2nd line trench or bivouac—48th Pioneers, 17th and 22nd Cos. S. & M.

3. Should withdrawal from the Fort be necessary (which is improbable) a new entrenchment, which is under construction, running from Redoubt "B" in an easterly direction to the river bank, will be held by the N.E. Section.

4. Before withdrawing from the Fort the new entrenchment will be occupied by one battalion from the General Reserve to cover withdrawal.

G.O.C. North-East Section will intimate his intention to withdraw to G.O.C. General Reserve, who will send up one battalion.

Having occupied the new entrenchment G.O.C. N.E. Section will release, as soon as possible, one battalion, to General Reserve.

This is assuming the battalion originally at "H," in close reserve, to have been absorbed.

The distribution on this line would then be :—

By day.	**North East Section.**	3 battns. in 1st line. 1 battn. in reserve at Middle line.
	North West Section.	As before.
By night.	**North East Section.**	As for day.
	North West Section.	As in para. 2.

5. Should further withdrawal from main line and new entrenchment become necessary (which is unlikely) the **Middle line** will be taken up and held.

6. Four small blunted *flèches*, with long flanks for about 50 rifles each, to block approaches and force enemy to commence sapping earlier, should be quickly put in hand at distances of 100 to 200 yards in front of middle line.

This will be carried out by G.O.C. General Reserve in communication with D.E.C.

7. The Middle line is divided into N.E. Section from river bank on East to point about 800 yards westward, i.e., to reserve trenches at end of reserve communication trench exclusive ; N.W. Section from this point to river on West. Middle line is about 1,900 yards in extent.

8. Before withdrawal from Main line, including new entrenchment, it will be necessary to hold Middle line. Assuming that the close reserves are engaged, a battalion from General Reserve will hold the N.E. Section of middle line to cover withdrawal.

One battalion from General Reserve will hold N.W. Section middle line.

G.O.C.'s N.E. and N.W. Sections will, if they can, tell G.O.C. General Reserve to which part of Middle line they wish these battalions sent. Otherwise they will normally hold the fire at intervals, leaving communication trenches clear.

9. On withdrawal and as circumstances permit, G.O.C. N.E. Section will send two battalions through to 2nd line.

G.O.C. North West Section will send three battalions through to 2nd line.

† Less picquet of 50 men on west river bank.

These battalions will come under orders of G.O.C. General Reserve for distribution in second line or bivouacs as circumstances permit.

G.O.C.'s Sections and General Reserve will in communication arrange details of movement of battalions from one line to the other.

ORDERS FOR MOVE OUT OF KUT IN SUPPORT OF RELIEF FORCE.

To G.S.O., I.

My dispositions in case I move out to co-operate with General Aylmer's force on its arrival on the left bank near the Fort are to be indicated to all G.O.C.'s Brigades as follows :—

(1) **On the approach of General Aylmer's Force.**

The Brigade then on duty as General Reserve will be moved by my order into covered position south of the Fort, in support of the 17th Brigade.

(2) **The 18th Brigade** under Brigadier-General Hamilton will move into the Middle Line and becomes the **General Reserve,** leaving 1 battalion to look after Kut, withdrawing 1 battalion from Liquorice Village on right bank for this purpose.

My battle formation would then be :—

Principal Mass on the right—

Brigade formerly in General Reserve leading.
17th Brigade in support.
Add 48th Pioneers and 1 Field Battery.

Minimum Force, comprising 1 brigade already installed in N.W. Section and Sappers and Miners, 2 field batteries and the Howitzer Battery, to move along the left bank of the Tigris when ordered to advance. The **General Reserve** will be at the disposal of G.O.C. Division at his orders—Divisional Hd. Qrs. with General Reserve.

On principle, I shall move the **Principal Mass** at effective field-artillery range, 2,500 yards or 1¼ miles on the right (north) of the Minimum Force.

If the progress of one of these two Columns is seriously resisted, the other column will assist its progress by at once commencing an envelopment against the hostile body opposing its neighbour's advance.

I shall move the **General Reserve** behind the gap between the two columns but nearer the Principal Mass than the Minimum Force.

Note.—The Norfolks to rejoin 18th Brigade.

C. V. F. T.,

Kut. 20th January, 1916.

PROJECTS FOR CO-OPERATION WITH GENERAL AYLMER'S FORCE, DRAWN UP BY ME IN MY OPERATION ORDER BOOK.

Scheme "A."

For attacking the Turkish main camp on left bank, west of Kut. I should attack in 2 Columns :—

"A" Column on the right = **Principal Mass and offensive wing of manœuvre.**
"B" Column on the left moving along bank of river. = **Minimum Force.**

"A" Column add 48th Pioneers and 17th Battn. = 2 Brigades, viz., 17th Infantry Brigade (leaves half battalion in Fort) and the brigade which happens to be in General Reserve in second-line trenches when this action comes to pass. All Machine-guns brigaded to go with "A" Column.

"B" Column. Add Sappers and Miners. Consists of that brigade which happens to be in the "Middle line trenches" at time this action comes to pass.

The Bulk of Artillery able to be taken with us will be with "B" Column (2 Field Batteries).

The General Reserve will be 18th Brigade under General Hamilton, which will move into the second-line trenches. One Battalion must be left in **Kut** to guard Hospitals and magazines and S. and T. supplies, 1 Battalion being withdrawn from **Kut** for that purpose.

General Reserve at disposal of G.O.C. Division.

On principle I should move " A " Column at effective field-artillery range, i.e., 2,500 yards, or 1¼ miles on right of Column " B."

If the progress of one of these two columns is seriously resisted, the other column will assist the progress of its neighbour by commencing an envelopment against the hostile body opposing its advance.

General Staff to work out details in accordance with Scheme " A."

Scheme " B."

Project for co-operation with General Aylmer's force by attacking the Turkish force now at HANNAH on left bank when it retires past us to Turkish main camp on left bank. This movement in retreat must be carried out if General Aylmer is successful in his right-bank manœuvre.

In this case also there would be two columns.

Column " B." = Minimum Force. 17th Infantry Brigade. (Would leave half battalion to hold fort.)
add Sappers and Miners and 17th Batt.

Column " A." = Principal Mass. That Brigade which is in General Reserve at time action happens, and 2 Battalions of 18th Brigade under General Hamilton.
add 48th Pioneers and 1 Field Batty.

18th Brigade leaves 1 battalion in **Kut** town,
1 battalion in Liquorice Village.

" B " Column would debouch from fort by its N.E. exit and move along river bank.

" A " Column would debouch by " A " redoubt to west of Fort and move about 1 mile north of Column " B " acting the part of the offensive wing of manœuvre.

Note.—The battalion on duty in N.W. Section trenches will demonstrate to the north in order to assist the debouch of " A " Column west of Fort.

General Staff to work out details of above scheme.

Scheme " C "

For crossing 6th Division to right bank and measures for covering this movement.

The movement includes guns, sick and wounded, ammunition and supplies. After all these are put across the troops in Middle Line and Fort will evacuate these defences, retiring in echelon, the 17th Brigade and Fort garrison retiring first to middle line and then the brigade in the N.W. Section to 2nd Line, followed by 17th Brigade to 2nd Line. The **Brigade of N.W. Section** then retires through the Brigade in General Reserve in Second Line, *viâ* Brick Kilns, and crosses bridge ; followed by **17th Brigade** by shortest way to bridge, guns covering this movement from right bank opposite the middle line.

The Brigade in General Reserve in 2nd Line would then retire in echelons of battalions from the left (West) and cross bridge. **The 18th Brigade** would remain throughout the operation holding North West exterior wall of Kut town, Brick Kilns, and Cemetery Redoubt ; thus forming the **Rear Guard.** General Hamilton, at my signal, will then commence his retirement, from Brick Kilns, then the town, lastly Cemetery, crossing bridge to right bank.

General Staff to work out details of passage of river for guns, sick, wounded, ammunition, and supplies in accordance with Scheme " D."

Note.—Sappers and Miners working on bridges and rafts and 48th Pioneers working with guns under C.R.A.

Scheme "D"

To co-operate with General Aylmer's force to cross the Hai.

I. I should reinforce the garrison of the **Liquorice Village** (i.e., 2 battalions and 1 double Coy. the Rajputs) with rest of General Hamilton's brigade, and **then add that brigade which happens to be in General Reserve in Second Line Trenches** (this brigade would leave 1 battalion in the town) by means of ferry at night, in, say, 3 nights.

The artillery in their positions on left bank would support the action of the two brigades when at daybreak they capture the nearest trenches, and set to work to take the trenches west and south of the village, while a portion of the guns will be switched on to the enemy's gun emplacements on right bank above Liquorice Village, i.e., N.W. of the Village.

The fact of this attack should enable the Relieving Force to cross the **Hai.**

II. Should General Aylmer after this operation decide to attack the enemy's main camp at **Shumran** bend on right bank of river, I should cross the **17th Brigade** to the Liquorice Village. Thus I shall have 3 brigades of the Division and move frontally along the bank against enemy's camp above-mentioned; mine would form the Minimum Force or Frontal attack, whilst General Aylmer's force would be the Principal Mass or wing of manœuvre, operating south-west of me, with the idea of turning or enveloping the enemy's camp from the south-west.

But I am convinced that, if General Aylmer's success is a good one, the enemy will retreat entirely up river, as far certainly as Azizieh.

General Staff to work out details of crossing troops to Liquorice Village in accordance with above idea, Scheme "D."

G.S.O., I.

I issue a 6th Division operation order secretly to G.O.C.'s Brigades (4) and O.C.R.A., O.C. 10th Brigade, R.F.A., D.E.C., O.C. Signal Service, A.Q.M.G., A.O.T., and A.D.M.S. to prepare to carry out **Project B** issued by me with the intention of attacking the enemy if he retires from Hannah on left bank.

The G.O.C.'s of the 30th, 18th and 17th Brigades will be prepared to march to the places of rendezvous given in my instructions on my order by 7 a.m. to-morrow if I give the order.

Information contained in Corps Commander's 13/318/G. of 21st February is to be imparted by giving the above in a separate secret memo. The Corps Commander has arranged to deliver a surprise attack on the enemy's position at Hannah to-morrow, 22nd February, at dawn—in which his whole force will take part.

If the enemy is driven out from his position, the G.O.C. Division will attack the enemy in co-operation with General Aylmer.

G.O.C. N.W. Section is to have his attention drawn to instructions concerning his demonstration in the event of G.O.C. Division moving out to attack the enemy.

C. V. F. T.

21st February, 1916.

Evening 22nd February, 1916, ordered a state of modified readiness for troops, i.e., troops not to leave bivouacs or billets for any long period, all minor arrangements to be made by orders of G.O.C.'s Brigades.

C. V. F. T.

22nd February, 1916.

Scheme "E"

For crossing the Tigris to the right bank and co-operating with General Aylmer in the battle.

G.S.O., I.

Please draw up this project in a similar way to Scheme "C" (the Evacuation of Kut to the right bank) on the following lines:—

I should take command of the **Maximum Force**, consistent with the ensuring the security of Kut, and cross river with it to the right bank as soon as the Relieving Force puts in an appearance.

Leaving a **Minimum Force,** consistent with the ensuring the security of Kut to hold the Kut defences, Town and Liquorice Village on right bank. Maximum Force = Two weak brigades and 63rd Batt. R.F.A., less 1 section.

A. Column.

The Provisional Brigade =	Norfolks.
Commanded by	Oxfords.
Colonel Evans.	22nd Punjabis.
	66th Punjabis.

B. Column.

The brigade which happens to be in General Reserve at the time.

Medical Detachment and a proportion of A.T. carts for wounded, i.e., Minimum proportion.

The men to carry 150 rounds, 1 day's cooked food and great-coats.

Supplementary to Scheme " E."

I have said that the

Minimum Force left to hold the Kut defences will be under the command of the G.O.C. Brigade in the N.W. Section—and will comprise Brigade in N.W. Section.

17th Brigade (less 1 British and 1 Indian battalion).
18th Brigade (less 1 British battalion).
All the Divisional Artillery (less 4 guns of 63rd Battery, R.F.A.).

It would appear to be a very large Minimum, but below that I do not consider the safety of Kut would be ensured, in view of possible heavy counter-stroke by Turks on left bank against the defences of our far too extended frontage. Nor could I as regards the sortie in force cross a greater Maximum to the other bank of the river in anything like reasonable time, in view of my means for crossing—two flying-bridges, the *Sumana*, and one barge. The flying-bridges, I am given to understand, will take nearly 5 hours to fix up, which is slow to a maddening degree, and the two, my D.E.C. says, could not cross more than 150 men an hour The *Sumana* and barge I suppose can put across about 400 men per hour.

In order to force the passage of a river, the principle is that the Minimum Force demonstrates in order to make the enemy believe it is attempting to force a passage by making a pretended frontal attack, whilst the Principal Mass, constituting the offensive wing of manœuvre, crosses at another locality well to the flank of the minimum force, i.e., by a turning manœuvre.

On this principle I purpose to demonstrate with the garrison of the Liquorice village whilst the crossing of the Tigris to the right bank is undertaken by Columns " A " and " B " of the sortie force in the bend of the river due east of town of Kut, i.e., where it is best sheltered and concealed from the hostile gun-fire.

I do not intend to make the crossing at night, because I am not absolutely certain of the arrival of the Relieving Force. It might rain near Sannaiyat and yet be fine at Kut, and I do not think the relieving force would advance on a wet day. In such a case my sortie in force on the right bank would be heavily attacked, a general attack would in such a case undoubtedly be delivered on Kut from all sides, and the sortie manœuvre would end, if not in a grave disaster, certainly with grave loss.

This is not an occasion where I should risk the fruit of our defence in night hazards and chances, and I shall therefore not commence the crossing operations with the sortie force until the relieving force appears on the scene. Besides, to cross at night would give the Turks absolute indication of some movement by the relieving force. I do not expect serious opposition to my troops, ferrying across in packets, installing themselves in the trenches on the opposite bank already made by the Turks, and pushing out to the main line of Turkish trench (an old water-cut, I believe, east of the river bank). After the first column has crossed the river I should next cross all the sappers and pioneers, and roughly shape the trenches on right bank into a bridge-head

shape if I do not decide to push forward at once. The S. and M. and Pioneers would be followed by the remaining Column of the Sortie Force.

As soon as my Sortie Force stands collected on the right bank I shall act as circumstances demand; my idea being to join or co-operate with the enveloping attack of General Aylmer around the extreme right (or southern) flank of Essinn position.

Once the Relieving Force is installed in the Essinn position Kut is automatically relieved—and if the Turks are badly defeated they will retreat, probably in disorder, and try to cross the Hai Bridge, which, I take it, will be menaced by the bulk of our Cavalry and H.A. guns.

C. V. F. T.,
M.G.

2nd March, 1916,
Kut-al-Amara.

Fort to be held at all cost.

G.S.O., I.

Please inform **General Officers Commanding Brigades** that in view of our having to co-operate with General Aylmer's force on right bank and in view of the fact that if he instals himself at **Essinn position** on right bank, we are **automatically** relieved, i.e., we can get across by the right bank to reach him at Essinn if it becomes necessary to abandon Kut. I have decided that the Fort must be held at all costs on the Hougomont principle.

It is obvious that if the G.O.C. left in command at Kut when I cross the river with the Sortie force, vacates the Fort on the ground—and with every reason—that his force is too weak to hold such an extended line as we are forced by circumstances to hold at present, the enemy will at once occupy the Fort and interfere seriously with all operations for joining hands with General Aylmer. In addition, this would make the Brick Kilns impossible for our guns and cause great loss in the Town, etc.

You will now make all arrangements to put provisions into the Fort, and I will fix on strength of garrison in installation with Colonel Brown, who will command it.

Previous general instructions issued by me on subject of defence and occupation of Fort to be modified accordingly.

C. V. F. T.
3rd March, 1916.

Extracts from my Operation Order Book continued :—

General Instructions, to General Officers Commanding Brigades, dated 5th March, 1916.

I wish to explain to the G.O.C. Brigades on the eve of General Aylmer's push to relieve Kut that I have drawn up these plans, or rather projects of operations, to meet as many contingencies as I can think of, as it is impossible to say what the enemy may do, and also to meet General Aylmer's wishes as far as I can.

It is quite possible that the enemy may attack the N.W. or N.E. Sections of the Kut defences on the appearance of General Aylmer's force to the south-east, in order to contain or pin me to Kut and prevent my crossing to the right bank to co-operate with the Relief Force. These attacks might be decisive ones pushed well home, or, more probably, will be containing attacks by a Minimum Force, which will only be made serious on success being signalled in their principal field of battle.

The Turkish force at Hannah, also, might possibly retire from that locality and join in an attack on the Fort and N.E. Section of our defences.

Thus it will be observed that, in order to deal with circumstances and their demands, and being on the defensive-offensive, I have arranged so as to draw a most powerful General Reserve or Principal Mass into my hand in the south-eastern outskirts of the town, comprising two Brigades, which are in reality in a **Central position** ready for me to launch in either desired direction where my two Minimum Forces are installed across the enemy's two avenues of

approach, viz., General Delamain across the N.W. avenue of approach, and General Hoghton across the N.E. approach.

By rapidly uniting my Principal Mass with either one of those two Minimum Forces engaged in containing the enemy, I shall most certainly roll back or crush or defeat any attack of the enemy which might be pressing back either of the two Minimum Forces mentioned above.

If the enemy does not attack the N.W. or N.E. sections, my preparations for crossing the river to actively assist General Aylmer will go on.

It will be seen I have concentrated my artillery as much as possible to obtain eastern and south-eastern zones of fire, in accordance with General Aylmer's request to me, but, should my defence be seriously attacked from N.W. and N.E., I have arranged with C.R.A. that the guns be quickly drawn through the town and installed for N.W. and N.E. fire sweep.

C. V. F. TOWNSHEND,
Major-General.

Kut,
5th March, 1916.

APPRECIATION OF THE SITUATION AT KUT-AL-AMARA, MARCH 15TH, 1916.

(*a*) **The enemy's main force or principal mass** on the **left** bank of the Tigris entrenched at Hannah and echelonned back in support of that position, save 2 divisions (51st and 52nd Regiments and 12th Regiment) and a detachment of 2 regiments, total combatants about 14,000 and 27 guns.

(*b*) **A minimum force** on the right bank of the Tigris in what is called the "Essinn position," one and two-thirds divisions, about 8,000 combatants, with 19 guns, the 35th Division being very weak.

(*c*) **The Turkish containing force or force of observation** is at Shumran on the left bank, with a part of it on the right bank, a bridge connecting the two positions. It consists of the 45th Division, plus 3 battalions and 23 guns, roughly 7,000 or 8,000 men. Total number of combatants, say, 29,000 or 30,000 men and some 69 guns at least.

The connection between A and B is by rafts only at Magasis, but we may add to the above total some stray battalions we hear of in intelligence reports, and say 30,000 men at most under the command of Khalil Pacha.

The enemy suffered heavy loss on 8th March, but I do not know to what extent, the aide-de-camp of Khalil Pacha, who brought the letter, told one of my officers that the losses on both sides were about equal.

(2) I was led to believe that three more divisions were to have arrived to reinforce the enemy from Baghdad, where Von der Goltz has his centre of operations, directing the Turkish forces in Irak and Persia on a central position (or on interior lines) against the British on the Tigris, and a Russian force under Baratoff in the western (Persian) theatre of operations, which is also operating against Baghdad on the line Kirmanshah—Tak-i-gerrah Pass.

Khanikin. I do not know what is the strength of Von der Goltz's minimum force, on the line containing Baratoff's advance, but I should say a couple of divisions, and that Baratoff has a column of about 15,000 men only, as he has small columns detached on various missions in Persia. Baratoff signs himself "Commanding Russian Expeditionary Corps in Persia." It is possible that, in order to reinforce the Turkish minimum force retiring before Baratoff, the three Turkish divisions mentioned above, which were to have come to Kut, have been diverted by Von der Goltz to Khanikin, and that the fall of Erzroum has diverted all the Turkish reinforcements which had been destined to form a central mass under Von der Goltz and greatly upset his plans. Baratoff has several times telegraphed to me, since his arrival at Hamadan onward to Kirmanshah, to tell me of his progress and expressing hope of meeting soon in Mesopotamia. From the fact of the Russians being disseminated in small columns wandering about Persia I cannot believe they seriously intend a determined advance on Baghdad, as in that case they would have united all these small columns into a Principal Mass.

(3) I do not know the exact strength of the corps under Gorringe at Wadi, but according to telegram from G.H.Q. on 25th January, 1916, I must reckon Aylmer had some 20,000 combatants when he was making his attempt to relieve me on 8th March by making a push on the right bank. His losses in that action I do not know, but Khalil Pacha in his letter to me said Aylmer had lost 4,000 killed and wounded. Aylmer said his "losses were heavy," so I accept the 4,000 estimated, and, when the 13th British Division joins Gorringe (I suppose only some 12,000 strong), he will have some 28,000 combatants and 70 to 80 guns. I do not know the strength of the 13th Division, but as I know they lost heavily in the Gallipoli Peninsula, I suppose it is only some 12,000 strong.

(4) Had I the direction of the relief operations for Kut, I should on principle (after the failure on 8th March) deliver a decisive battle on the left bank with all my force united for the following reasons :—

I. The enemy's main force is on the left bank, and on principle therefore should be our principal objective ; if this force at Hannah is destroyed and followed up, the Turkish force on the right bank will collapse also and retreat towards the Hai, as happened in the action I delivered last September, and Kut will be relieved.

II. I should feint, however, with a column on the right bank at dusk, so as to make the enemy reinforce his force on the right bank. I should then withdraw that column under cover of darkness across to the left bank again by means of my bridge, and by a night march deliver a wide turning move with my Maximum Force to the northward against the enemy's left flank and rear.

III. I should leave only a minimum force, in the shape of a mixed detachment of 2 or 3 battalions and a battery, on the right bank, to guard my bridge-head on that bank.

IV. In order to pin the enemy down in part on the left bank, I should use one bridge extended and made to look as large as possible, and give it the bulk of my artillery so as to make it strong. Thus my turning attack, composed of the greatest maximum force possible, would be directed against the enemy's flank, as in fact I did in the Battle of Kut last September.

V. If the relieving force operates on the left bank, I am in a position to co-operate when it draws near Kut, i.e., I can attack the trenches in front of my N.E. Section of defence and drive the containing force back.

VI. If the relieving force, on the contrary, approaches me on the right bank, I can only cross the Tigris on flying-bridges with great difficulty and slowness, putting me practically out of the fight. I should be lucky to get 2,000 men across in four hours with the means available and under fire.

VII. Another great advantage of the left-bank operations to Gorringe would be that his ships can advance as he does, thus facilitating supply of ammunition, food, and evacuation of wounded.

(5) On the right bank, on the contrary, he has to leave all ships behind at a great distance and has great difficulties over water, food and evacuation of wounded, for he has little transport. These difficulties, I believe, caused Aylmer to retreat when he might have continued and succeeded.

(6) Not being on the spot, I do not know if Gorringe would have difficulty in delivering a turning attack with his maximum force on the left bank against the left flank of the enemy's position. But, if he can do it, and follow it up with a string of reserves, it would be, I feel certain, successful, and a brigade could easily hold in check that portion of the enemy installed at Suwada Marsh, some ten miles or so back west from the enemy's position at that place, where I turned them last September.

(7) The enemy's containing force at Shumran,* as on 8th March, will not do much, for, if they advance to reinforce along the left bank, they must pass me, and I should attack.

(8) The enemy's force at Essinn on the right bank is too far extended for decisive action. They hold an enormously extended line of some 11 miles at least, including the entrenchments south of the Dujailah Redoubt towards the Hai River, and they are busy digging there now. This is, of course, tempting, as they are holding with 8,000 men what two army corps would

* The force containing and besieging Kut.

hold in Europe, and so are very weak everywhere; but I believe difficulties over water and evacuation of wounded put the Essinn manœuvre out of the question.

(9) Gorringe being on the spot of course will weigh the pros and cons for either bank. I can only speak on principle from where I am. I think Baratoff should be asked to make a vigorous offensive some days before Gorringe's advance, so as to get the Turks here looking over their shoulders towards Baghdad. I expect he will meet resistance in the Tak-i-Gerra Pass, but that can be turned, like all mountain passes.

SIXTH DIVISION.

Statement of effective strength of Fighting Units on 4th December, 1915.

Units.	Officers.		Rank and File.	
	British.	Indian.	British.	Indian.
H.Q. 6th Division	15	—	35	6
H.Q. 16th Inf. Bde.	3	—	9	6
2nd Dorset Regt.	12	—	315	—
66th Punjabis	3	8	—	488
104th Rifles	2	7	—	322
117th Mahrattas	5	8	—	393
H.Q. 17th Inf. Bde.	2	—	10	6
1st Oxf. & Bucks L.I.	8	—	332	—
22nd Punjabis	7	5	—	395
103rd M.L.I.	5	17	—	529
119th Infantry	5	12	—	470
H.Q. 18th Inf. Bde.	3	—	8	6
2nd Norfolk Regt.	7	—	234	—
7th Rajputs	6	5	—	357
110th Inf.	4	7	—	330
120th Infantry	7	10	—	445
2nd R.W. Kent Regt.	6	—	267	—
1/4 Hants	10	—	163	—
24th Punjabis	8	11	—	484
67th Punjabis	8	10	—	332
76th Punjabis	9	13	—	333
2/7th Gurkhas	6	8	—	502
B.G.R.A. and Staff	3	—	5	2
H.Q. 10th Bde., R.F.A. ...	2	—	11	—
63rd Battery, R.F.A.	2	—	133	26
76th Battery, R.F.A.	2	—	124	26
82nd Battery, R.F.A.	3	—	132	27
1/5 Hants How. Batt.	3	—	110	55
Divl. Ammunition Column ...	3	2	48	27
H.Q. Heavy Art. Bde.	2	—	4	—
86th (H) Bty., R.G.A.	4	—	56	—
104th (H) Bty., R.G.A. ...	3	—	37	54
Maxim Battery	2	—	11	26
No. 11 M.A. Bde.	1	—	—	—
H.Q. D.E.C.	1	—	—	—
17th Coy., 3rd S. & M. ...	2	3	2	166
22nd Coy., 3rd S. & M. ...	3	—	—	171
Bridge Train	1	—	—	29
Searchlight Section	1	—	—	11
34th Divl. Sig. Coy.	4	1	54	87
48th Pioneers	7	7	—	358
23rd (Divl.) Cavalry	2	1	—	70
6th Cavalry Bde. H.Q. ...	5	—	1	1
"S" Battery, R.H.A.	3	—	94	32
14th Hussars	20	—	397	—
7th Lancers	8	12	—	319
16th Cavalry	7	10	—	209

Units.	Officers.		Rank and File.	
	British.	Indian.	British.	Indian.
33rd Cavalry	9	11	—	252
Cav. Bde. Ammun. Col. ...	1	—	7	19
Cav. Bde. Signal Troop ...	1	—	4	10
	246	168	2,603	7,381

Grand Total 10,398

Summary :—

Cavalry	1,505	Sent away 6th December.
Artillery	946	
Sappers and Miners ...	390	
Signal Service	146	
Infantry	7,411	
	10,398	
Deduct ...	1,505	Sent away 6th December.
	8,893	

SIXTH DIVISION.

Bi-weekly state showing effective strength of Fighting Units on 15th March, 1916.

Units.	Officers.		Rank and File.	
	British.	Indian.	British.	Indian.
H.Q. 6th Division	15	—	37	—
H.Q. 16th Inf. Bde.	3	—	11	—
2nd Dorset Regt.	9	—	332	—
66th Punjabis	5	15	—	424
104th Rifles	5	7	—	251
117th Mahrattas	5	14	—	324
H.Q. 17th Inf. Bde.	2	—	11	7
1st Oxf. and Bucks L.I. ...	7	—	303	—
22nd Punjabis	7	9	—	306
103rd M.L.I.	5	17	—	298
119th Infantry	5	15	—	352
H.Q. 18th Inf. Bde.	3	—	7	—
2nd Norfolk Regt.	7	—	303	—
7th Rajputs	5	6	—	315
110th M.L.I.	5	11	—	266
120th Infantry	5	12	—	337
H.Q. 30th Inf. Bde.	3	—	1	—
2nd R.W. Kent Regt. ...	6	—	270	—
1/4 Hants Regt.	7	—	152	—
24th Punjabis	5	12	—	430
67th Punjabis	3	9	—	261
76th Punjabis	6	15	—	347
2/7th Gurkhas	5	14	—	409
48th Pioneers	6	8	—	344
H.Q., D.E.C.	5	—	3	2
17th Coy. S. & M.	3	2	2	143
22nd Coy. S. & M.	2	2	1	153
Sirmur Sappers	1	4	—	66
Bridging Train	1	1	—	25
Searchlight Section	1	—	10	—
30th Divl. Sig. Coy.	5	2	48	95

Units.	Officers.		Rank and File.	
	British.	Indian.	British.	Indian.
30th Bde. Sig. Section	1	—	10	12
23rd (Divl.) Cavalry	1	2	—	85
Cavalry Depot	—	5	18	144
H.Q., C.R.A.	2	—	7	3
H.Q., 10th Bde., R.F.A. ...	1	—	13	—
63rd Battery, R.F.A.	3	—	86	36
76th Battery, R.F.A.	4	—	92	31
82nd Battery, R.F.A.	3	—	82	27
6th Ammun. Column	3	1	45	105
1/5th Hants How. Battery ...	2	—	92	54
H.Q. (H) Bde., R.G.A. ...	1	—	4	—
86th H.B., R.G.A.	4	—	70	14
104th H.B., R.G.A.	3	—	40	59
Vol. Artillery Battery	3	—	39	—
No. 1 I.M.A. Bde.	1	—	—	4
Maxim Battery	1	—	8	19
R.A. Details, employed under 17th Bde.	2	—	91	—
Army Corps Sig. Coy.	—	1	24	11
Royal Flying Corps	3	—	41	11
Total	190	184	2,253	5,770

Grand Total 8,397

Summary :—

Cavalry	235
Artillery	962
Infantry	6,396
Sappers and Miners	427
Signal Service	173
R.A. details and Miscellaneous Units ...	184
	8,397

Summaries of effectives at Kut-al-Amara at various dates throughout the siege.

	Cavalry	Artillery	Sappers and Miners	Signal Service	Infantry	Miscellaneous and R.A. Details	Total
4th December, 1915 ...	1,505	946	390	146	7,411	—	8,893
23rd January, 1916 ...	207	1,048	464	171	6,430	36	8,356
7th February, ,, ...	207	942	453	176	6,530	197	8,505
21st February, ,, ...	231	943	439	177	6,566	196	8,552
8th March, ,, ...	255	945	426	174	6,444	188	8,432
15th March, ,, ...	235	962	427	173	6,396	184	8,397
20th March, ,, ...	258	961	428	172	6,404	187	8,410
3rd April, ,, ...	261	953	434	172	6,376	188	8,384
19th April, ,, ...	258	935	436	177	6,168	187	8,161

Summaries of casualties at Kut-al-Amara during siege.

From 4th December, 1915 ...	*to 29th February*, 1916,	*to 31st March*, 1916.
Killed	455	504
Died of wounds	391	454
Wounded	1,608	1,836
Missing or deserted	30	48
Died of disease	443	546
Total deaths	1 289	1,504

Statement showing casualties by units in Kut-al-Amara between 4th December, 1915, and 31st March, 1916, including deaths from disease.

Unit.	British Officers.					Indian Officers.					Rank and File.					Followers.					Total.
	K.	D. of W.	W.	M.	D. of D.	K.	D. of W.	W.	M.	D. of D.	K.	D. of W.	W.	M.	D. of D.	K.	D. of W.	W.	M.	D. of D.	
Div. H.Q. ...	1	–	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	–	–	–	–	1	–	–	4
16th Bde. ...	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	1
Dorsets ...	2	1	2	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	19	13	40	–	5	1	–	1	–	1	85
66th Punj. ...	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	–	1	27	9	56	2	26	1	–	6	–	–	129
104th Rifles	–	–	1	–	–	1	1	3	–	1	19	12	75	–	35	1	2	2	–	2	155
117th Mah.	1	1	–	–	–	–	–	1	–	–	18	20	89	5	24	1	–	3	–	2	165
Oxfords ...	1	–	3	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	17	14	52	1	7	–	–	3	–	2	100
22nd Pun. ...	–	–	–	–	–	–	2	–	–	–	10	14	43	10	20	3	–	4	–	3	109
103rd M.L.I.	–	–	4	–	–	–	1	–	–	–	47	40	136	3	71	2	1	–	–	7	312
119th Inf. ...	1	–	2	–	1	2	–	1	–	–	35	22	110	–	42	1	3	–	–	2	222
18th Bde. ...	–	–	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1
Norfolks ...	–	–	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	8	9	46	–	9	1	1	3	–	2	80
7th Raj. ...	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	11	9	45	–	29	–	4	5	–	–	103
110th Inf. ...	–	–	–	–	–	1	1	–	–	–	15	27	28	2	29	–	–	1	–	–	104
120th Inf. ...	1	–	1	–	–	–	1	2	–	–	30	7	58	1	35	2	–	1	–	4	143
W. Kents ...	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	9	13	54	–	1	–	–	2	–	–	79
Hants ...	–	–	3	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	6	15	24	–	–	–	–	1	–	–	49
24th Pun. ...	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	15	10	89	2	11	2	1	3	–	–	133
67th Pun. ...	–	1	3	1	–	–	–	1	–	1	14	16	65	14	15	1	1	5	–	1	139
76th Pun. ...	–	1	2	–	–	1	–	4	–	–	32	17	90	2	16	2	1	3	–	–	171
2/7th Gur. ...	–	1	1	–	–	1	–	4	–	–	28	9	74	–	12	1	–	1	–	–	132
48th Pioneers	–	–	2	–	–	–	–	–	1	–	17	22	83	–	16	–	2	5	–	2	150
D.C.'s H.Q. ...	–	–	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	2
17th S. & M.	1	–	1	–	–	–	–	2	–	–	4	1	18	–	9	–	–	1	–	2	39
22nd S. & M.	–	–	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	9	2	26	–	6	–	1	1	–	–	46
Sir. Sapp. ...	–	–	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	3	9	9	–	5	1	1	2	–	–	31

Unit.	British Officers.					Indian Officers.					Rank and File.					Followers.					Total.
	K.	D. of W.	W.	M.	D. of D.	K.	D. of W.	W.	M.	D. of D.	K.	D. of W	W.	M.	D. of D.	K.	D. of W.	W.	M.	D. of D.	
23rd Cav. ...	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	3	5	–	–	–	–	–	–	2	11
Cav. Depot	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	7	11	–	5	–	–	1	–	–	25
C.R.A. ...	–	2	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	1	–	1	5
10th Bde. ...	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	2	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	2
63rd Bty. ...	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	5	12	11	–	1	–	–	–	–	–	29
76th Bty. ...	–	–	2	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	5	6	28	–	2	–	–	1	–	–	44
82nd Bty. ...	–	–	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	5	13	–	2	–	–	1	–	2	25
Amm. Col. ...	–	1	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	2	5	8	–	1	1	–	–	–	1	20
Hants Bty. ...	–	–	2	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	3	15	–	3	–	1	1	–	5	31
Heavy Bde.	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1
86th Bty. ...	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	5	12	–	1	–	–	4	–	–	23
104th Bty. ...	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	2	–	17	–	3	–	–	1	–	2	25
M.A. Bde. ...	–	–	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1
23rd M. Bty.	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	2	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	2
Vol. Bty. ...	–	–	3	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	7	2	26	–	1	1	1	2	–	–	43
Maxim Bty.	–	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	2	–	12	–	1	–	–	–	–	–	16
34th S. Coy.	–	–	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	4	11	–	5	–	–	2	–	2	26
30th Bde. S.S.	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	1	–	–	–	1	–	–	–	–	3
A.C. Sig. Coy.	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	3	–	2	–	–	3	–	–	9
R.F.C. ...	–	–	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	3	–	–	–	–	1	–	–	5
Chaplains ...	–	–	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1
Medl. Estab.	–	–	–	–	1	1	–	–	–	–	2	1	5	–	4	9	17	62	–	14	116
Supply Estab.	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	4	6	1	–	11	13	20	–	3	59
Trans. ,,	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	–	8	–	–	18	21	102	3	24	177
R.I.M. ...	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	2	–	3	–	–	5
Total ...	8	9	44	1	2	7	6	19	1	3	427	370	1510	43	454	63	72	259	3	87	3388
	64					36					2804					484					

Grand Total 3,388

Summary :—

	K.	D. of W.	W.	M.	D. of D.	Total
British Officers ...	8	9	44	1	2	64
Indian Officers ...	6	7	19	1	3	36
British Ranks ...	84	103	343	2	36	568
Indian Ranks ...	343	263	1,171	41	418	2,236
Followers ...	63	72	259	3	87	484

Small Arms Ammunition at Kut-al-Amara during the siege.

4th December, 1915	822	rounds for 7,250 rifles.
28th January, 1916	740	„ „ „ „
21st February, „	735	„ „ „ „
15th March, „	731	„ „ „ „

Statement of Ammunition in Magazines at Kut-al-Amara on 4th December, 1915.

No.	Guns		No. of Rounds	Rounds per gun
19	18-pounder	Shrapnel	11,200	590
2	13-pounder	Shrapnel	3,540	590
4	5-inch Guns	Shrapnel	860	215
	„ „	Lyddite	832	208
4	5-inch Howitzers	Shrapnel	314	78
	„ „	Lyddite	947	236
2	4-inch Guns	Shrapnel	460	230
	„ „	Lyddite	521	260

Statements of Ammunition in Magazines at Kut-al-Amara.

Guns.	On 28th January, 1916.	On 23rd March, 1916.	
18-pounder Shrapnel	7,206	6,252	
13-pounder Shrapnel	939	781	
5-inch Shrapnel	539	452	
5-inch Lyddite	463	349	
4-inch Shrapnel	131	138	
4-inch Lyddite	407	105	
*15-pounder Shrapnel	424	377	
4.7-inch Shrapnel	210	189	Naval guns.
4.7-inch C-pointed	692	595	Naval guns.
4.7-inch Lyddite	324	268	Naval guns.

* Two guns used as Post defence guns.

PART V—CONSTANTINOPLE

MY CAPTIVITY, MAY 1916 to OCTOBER 1918

CHAPTER XIX

A PRISONER OF WAR

I LEFT Baghdad on 12th May, 1916, in company with Colonel Parr, Captain Morland, and Colonel Isàkh Bey, a Circassian, who was the Turkish officer in charge of me, my Portuguese cook, an Indian servant, and two British orderlies. We went by rail to Suwarra, the rail-head, where we arrived at 8.30 p.m., and were given quarters in the railway station by the German station-master. Leaving Suwarra by road, and driving in crazy old "Arabans" and an old Chippendale victoria, we reached Tekrit, on the right bank of the Tigris, at 11 p.m., by a rough and rugged road over a monotonous plain, in places undulating and accidented by stony ravines. At Tekrit we had to rest our weary, half-starved little horses until 3 p.m. on the 14th, and I shot four or five couple of sandgrouse before breakfast for our mess. At that hour we started again and reached the Turkish fortified post of Seriniyeh at midnight.

On the morning of 15th May I shot six couple of sandgrouse before breakfast. We did not start till 3 p.m., and we halted at 4 o'clock on the morning of the 16th at a place where a small brackish stream crossed the track, where we slept in our carts. Here we overtook a party of about forty ragged and weary British and Indian prisoners, who had been taken from Gorringe's force, and included the survivors of the *Julnar*. They were under Sub-Lieutenant Reid, R.N.R., who told us they had to pay for donkey hire, and that one of their number was ill. Before we moved off I made Isàkh Bey give Reid fifteen liras for expenses of this nature, and deliver a severe lecture to the Turkish officer in charge of the prisoners. This was all I could do.

At 2 p.m. on 16th May we reached Kila Shergat, on the right bank of the Tigris. Many of the houses of this place are of white marble, and it is inhabited by a great colony of storks. It is the site of an ancient fortified city, of which the ruined walls of the citadel or "reduit" alone remain; there is also

the perfect trace, with some columns still standing, of a palace or temple, which has been excavated by the German antiquarians, who have been at work in Mesopotamia for some years past. They have worked busily inside the citadel, and I was told that they have found many treasures. It was a great treat to reach the river again, for the road had run many miles inland from it, and to have a swim.

We resumed our journey at 5 a.m. on 17th May and reached Gazàra arrest-house, on the right bank of the Tigris, at 11.45 a.m. Enver Pacha, with a large suite of German and Austrian staff-officers, passed down the river on rafts or "killiks" at 5 p.m., on his way to Baghdad to confer with Khalil Pacha. Motor-cars and baggage were loaded on the rafts.

On 18th May we reached Hammam Ali, a small village with a bath for rheumatic people. There is petroleum all about this country, and we encamped alongside a petrol spring. We had much difficulty on this day's march, crossing many small streams in boggy depressions, in which the carts stuck. The baggage had to be unloaded in order to extricate them.

At 11 a.m. on 19th May we reached Mosul. Here we lodged in the club-house of the Turkish officers of the garrison, which is situated close to the barracks in a little garden on the bank of the river. Opposite, on a plateau on the left bank, stood the ruins of Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrians and the home of Semiramis the great queen.

Mosul is a large Arab city on the right bank of the Tigris, the centre of a country which is the veritable granary of Asia Minor. It is estimated that the Mosul district could easily feed an army of 70,000 men annually with meat and grain.

We started again from Mosul on 22nd May, a day and a half having been passed by Isàkh Bey in procuring transport to take us on. We now had three motor-lorries, and we made for Ras-al-Ain, the rail-head.

The Turkish line of communications from Constantinople to Baghdad *viâ* Mosul, which was the route we were following, is some 1,255 miles in length. It runs from Baghdad *viâ* Mosul, Ras-al-Ain, Aleppo, Tarsus, over the Taurus Mountains, Bozanti, Konia, and Afion Kara Hissar to Constantinople. In May, 1916, the rail-head towards Baghdad was Ras-al-Ain. Between this point and Samarra, whence the railway ran into Baghdad, a gap of three hundred miles had to be crossed.

The remaining unfinished gaps in the railway at the time of which I write, were :—

(*a*) Islahi-Marmouri—some forty miles of hill-road, crossing the Amanus Mountains.

(*b*) Tarsus-Bozanti—about forty-five miles over the Taurus Mountains.

We negotiated both these gaps on motor-lorries.

The road between Samarra and Mosul was bad, but it pre-

sented no difficulty for a railway. The Turks used "killiks" (skin rafts) between Mosul and Baghdad, as this section of the Tigris is very rapid, the river in many places reminding me of the Indus on the north-west frontier of India.

On 22nd May, the day that we left Mosul, we halted at Nisibin at 6 p.m., having experienced difficulties at drifts on the road. This was a fortified town in the days of the Roman general Belisarius, who commanded the expedition sent by Justinian to reconquer Mesopotamia from the Persians in 541 A.D., and used Nisibin as his advanced base.

We left in motor-lorries at 9 a.m. on 23rd May, and did the seventy miles to Ras-al-Ain by 4 p.m. We passed some 4,000 Turkish infantry on the road, who were marching to Baghdad.

Ras-al-Ain was a small village with a standing detachment of German engineers and transport corps. The German soldiers were young and of fine physique, in brand-new khaki uniforms and equipped with odd bullet-shaped helmets. We had met so many German officers on the road between Baghdad and Ras-al-Ain that we had no doubt in our minds that they intended to make Turkey an appanage of the German Empire, and to found an Eastern Empire in Mesopotamia. The Germans were even manufacturing the gold Turkish liras, and they were attaching their officers to all Turkish regiments and battalions. In conversation with us the Turkish officers deeply resented this, and said openly that Enver Pacha was evidently in the hands of the Germans.

On 25th May, we left Ras-al-Ain by train at 6 a.m. and reached Aleppo at 6.30 p.m., a journey of some 180 miles. The Euphrates is crossed by a bridge of the Forth Bridge type at Jerrabus.

I was met at the station of Aleppo by a large number of Turkish officers and gendarmerie, who were drawn up on the platform and saluted me. We drove to Barron's Hotel, where it was a great luxury to have a proper bath, good food, a bedroom and clean sheets. I was also given a private sitting and dining-room.

During our stay at Aleppo I visited the ancient citadel, which interested me very much. It evidently dates from the time of the Crusaders, or shortly after; its fortifications are of the Middle Ages, and the walls—of an enormous thickness—are in a splendid state of preservation, as also is the palace with its great hall of audience. The citadel stands on an isolated hill in the middle of the city. It is surrounded by a vast ditch, revetted with stone from the foot of the walls to the bottom of the ditch, and it is therefore impossible to escalade.

A high bridge like a viaduct—I suppose about a hundred and fifty feet in height—crosses the ditch from the fortified bridge-head to the castle. I have read, in some novel or other, of a duel between two knights on horseback who charged

each other from the opposite ends of this bridge, which has no balustrade and is very narrow. All I can say is that they had *some* nerves!

The Turkish General Commanding at Aleppo, Chefik Pacha, a man of great stature, was very polite to me, and called on me at the hotel, accompanied by some of his officers. He was a friend of Colonel Isàkh Bey, who seemed to be a most popular man wherever we went. I also met the American Consul, Mr. Jackson, who, so I was told at Constantinople, had helped British and French prisoners a great deal.

We left Aleppo by train at 6 a.m. on 29th May, and arrived at Islàhi at midday. Here the railway ended, and we had to cross the mountains, under which the railway is being tunnelled, to Amànus, the next rail-head. This range of hills is called the Amànus "mountains," but where we crossed the pass we were certainly not over 5,000 feet above sea level. We found ourselves in a beautiful country of hills, valleys and streams, the hills of greystone covered with scrub. Our transport was German motor-lorries with German chauffeurs, part of a large motor-lorry depot of 250 to 300 cars. We reached Marmourie, where we got the rail again, at 5.30 p.m.

We left the next morning at 9 a.m. by train, and arrived at Tarsus about 5.30 p.m. We were to stay for the night with the Turkish General Commanding at Tarsus, another friend of Colonel Isàkh Bey, and had to motor some two or three miles to the town from the railway station. The German officer in charge of the motor transport wished to drive me to the town, and an altercation took place between him and Isàkh Bey, who refused to let the German get into the car, saying that he was in sole charge of me, and that the German must remember that he was in the country of the Turks, not in Germany, and could give no orders here. Isàkh was so menacing and furious that the German submitted, and we drove off in triumph without him.

The Turkish General had a good dinner for us, and he and Isàkh passed the evening in round abuse of the Germans. The General told me that British warships had bombarded him at long range a short time before, doing no damage, as his troops were concealed behind small hills. They used to damage the telegraph wire, but it was always repaired in two or three hours during the night.

We left Tarsus the next morning, 31st May, in a German motor-car, with a German chauffeur, for Bozanti, the next rail-head. The Germans had about 150 cars and lorries working the Bozanti-Tarsus section. We travelled over the Taurus Mountains by a most beautiful winding valley, which reminded me of the Sind Valley in Kashmir, through great pine forests and along mountain streams, with great peaks and cliffs towering above us. We passed through a rocky defile, very pre-

cipitous and narrow, which is named Alexander the Great's Gate. Here is a tablet of stone cut out on the face of the rock with an inscription by Alexander to commemorate the march of his army through this defile; Belisarius and Godfrey de Bouillon also took this road. From this we debouched into a great wide valley bordered by pine-covered hills, which resembled a valley in the Austrian Tyrol.

At Bozanti, Enver Pacha's special train was drawn up, and he sent for me to see him in his carriage. He spoke in a very flattering way of the defence of Kut, and of my ability in advancing nearly to Baghdad with what he called *une poignée d'hommes*. He said that I should be the honoured guest of his nation, which appreciated the way I had done my duty to my country. I reminded him of his offer to me in a telegram to go home on parole if I did not destroy my guns. I told him that it was impossible for me to purchase my liberty in that way, and so I had destroyed them, but now I hoped he would allow me to be exchanged and go to England. He said that perhaps that would be done, he would see. I must not grieve at being a prisoner, it was the fortune of war. I remarked that I knew that, and that during the Napoleonic Wars half Napoleon's marshals had become prisoners of war at some time or other, and that it always happened in war if the leaders have to be in the front line. He said he would see me on my arrival at Constantinople, as he was on his way there, and, shaking hands cordially with me, ended the interview. A large staff of German and Austrian officers was with him, and as I walked along the train many of them saluted me, and I saw others snapshotting me with Kodaks.

I noticed that the bulk of rolling stock on the railway from Bozanti to Constantinople was Belgian; all the trucks were marked "Brussels," and had the numbers of men and horses painted on them in French. The locomotives were German, as were the engine-drivers, stokers and guards.

We arrived at Constantinople on 3rd June, our twenty-second day from Baghdad. For some time we were running along the shore of the Gulf of Ismid in the Sea of Marmara. We passed several picturesque little towns nestling under capes and cliffs, and we noticed considerable numbers of coast craft and fishing craft.

We arrived at the large terminus of Haidar Pacha at Skutari, opposite Constantinople, at about 5.30 p.m. On the platform I was met by the G.O.C., 1st Turkish Army, his staff, and many War Office officials. There were also large crowds of people in the station. Isàkh Bey, and a Turkish naval A.D.C., Tewfik Bey, who had been specially attached to me, and had come to meet me at Haidar Pacha, introduced me to all the officers, and I had a reception and cigarettes and coffee in the waiting-room of the station. I wondered at this reception of me, a prisoner

of war. I was treated with as much respect and honour as if I had come to inspect Constantinople, I thought.

Tewfik Bey, who talked English well, then took us on board a naval steam-launch, placed at my disposal after the reception, and, with our baggage and servants, we steamed for Prince's Islands, which lie about ten miles from Constantinople in the Sea of Marmara. A house had been selected for me on the Island of Halki, which forms one of the group. It was my first visit to Constantinople, which I saw in front of me with all its minarets and palaces, the deep blue of the Sea of Marmara, and the fairy-like Prince's Islands, dotted with villas and woods —all most beautiful. On arrival at Halki, where the Naval School is situated, we drove up to my house, which was situated on a high cliff amongst the woods, and which had been taken for me by Government. It was announced to me by Tewfik Bey that all entertainment was at the expense of the Turkish Government.

On 5th June, I was taken across to Constantinople to see Enver Pacha at the War Office. Enver is a good-looking and soldierly man of, I should say, 37 or 38 years of age. He was very smart in his khaki uniform. His manner was charming; he told me that I was to consider myself a guest of Turkey, and that the Sultan had ordered that I was to be given the honours and salutes of an army corps commander. I was at liberty to go where I pleased, he said, to Constantinople, Pera, etc., or wherever I chose. All he asked in return was that if I were tempted to escape I would warn him that I wanted to get away! I was astonished at his request, but I laughed and said, "Yes, I will do so." I did not give my parole, nor did he ask for it. To give parole would have necessitated signing the parole, and this I was resolved not to do.

Enver asked me if I would like my wife and daughter to come and join me in captivity. I thanked him, and said I would. He at once ordered a telegram to be sent to the British Foreign Office, saying that the Sultan gave his permission for this.

At Constantinople I soon met Izzet Pacha, of Cairo. He had been prevented from returning to Egypt by the sudden outbreak of war, which found him at Constantinople, as it was his custom every year to pass a couple of months or so there, while on his way back from London or Paris to Cairo. He had a pretty villa on the Bosphorus.

I had known him when I was in the Egyptian Army and he had met my people in London. He was always most kind to me, and, when he heard that Kut had fallen, he spoke to Enver and other Turkish Ministers on my behalf. He told me that he had also suggested to Talaat and Enver that I should be allowed to live at the British Embassy at Pera when my wife arrived, as it would be a more suitable residence for her than

Halki or Prinkipo. Enver allowed me to send a telegram to the British Foreign Office in this matter, but the F.O. answered that, as I was under an armed guard, it would not do to turn the British Embassy into a place of internment. As the Austrian Government also refused permission for her to pass through their territory to reach me, the matter had to be dropped.

On 27th June I visited the American Embassy, of which Mr. Philip was in charge; he was immensely kind to me, and I often used to lunch with him there, where I could read all the London papers.

Owing to the awful misery of mind I went through each morning on waking a prisoner, out of the war through no fault of mine, I was soon in a very bad state of mind, and for some time wrote most bitter letters to everyone. I mention this matter to show that I was tried, and, if some of my enemies in high places read this, perhaps they will pardon my too outspoken comments. I was seeing red at the time and I felt utterly reckless of my future. The only consolation I had in my misery was in study, and during my captivity I wrote a book on strategy and higher tactics which I had projected for some years, but never could get time for. Luckily I had all my notes with me. My eight or nine hours' study a day saved me from going mad. I thank God I was always a student. In peace time my minimum hours of study are four hours every day in the week except Sunday, and it was not hard to double this in captivity. It was my only means of consolation.

I also imbued my fellow-captive, Captain Morland, with a thirst for the Napoleonic doctrine, and he became as fanatical as I on the subject. An interesting form of study was to construct problems to solve by putting oneself in Enver's place as regards the distribution of the armies on the various fronts.

About this time Germans began to swarm in Constantinople and Pera. The hotels were overflowing with officers and business men, who took over banks and many shops and business houses. They even managed the theatres and cinemas; they hired sea-side villas at Prinkipo and Halki, and were accompanied by many wives and mothers-in-law! Many German motor-cars, filled with young German officers, dashed about the streets. Many of them, one could see, were temporary officers or civilians put into uniform. Hardly any, I suppose, had ever been in a motor-car before, much less owned one. And there were many German naval officers and seamen as well as troops.

The Germans took over the Turkish war-ships, and the Turkish navy fell entirely in the hands of the Germans. The *Goeben* had a crew of a thousand German officers and men, and the *Breslau* one of three hundred, for though these ships had

been publicly presented to the Turks, and flew the Turkish flag, they had never been handed over.

The Turkish officers understood plainly by August, 1916, that they would never get rid of the Germans, who had some 14,000 troops in Constantinople and the environs, and a further 14,000 in Asia Minor. They hated the Germans for their swagger and insolence, but liked the Austrians, who were mostly gentlemen, and naturally gentlemen, just as the Germans are naturally bounders. It was at this time that I first began to ponder how I might take advantage of this state of affairs. Many Turkish officers talked most freely with me, and I began to indulge the hope that I should see a revolution in Constantinople. In such a case I determined to play a leading part.

On 7th October, 1916, I wrote to Generals Melliss and Delamain who, with other senior officers, were interned at Broussa, on the subject of Enver Pacha's statement that the Turkish officer prisoners of war, at Cairo, were being treated badly by the British. This was his reply when his attention was drawn to the condition of our sick soldiers on the road from Baghdad to their prison camps in Asia Minor. I informed them that I had read that the treatment of our soldiers in Turkey had been discussed in the House of Commons, more than two months before. The American Embassy had also asked permission for one of their officials to visit the British prisoners of war along the line of communications. The American Embassy had done their utmost, and I cannot say how grateful I was to Mr. Philip for his sympathy and work in this matter. Anyone who has travelled over the road from Baghdad to Afion Kara Hissar, in Asia Minor, and remembers that our soldiers, worn out and emaciated at the fall of Kut, had to *walk* it, will not wonder that numbers died—the bulk of dysentery.

Prior to leaving Kut I warned Khalil Pacha that our men were not able to walk. I said if they were forced to march they would die in such a climate, at such a time of year, and in such a state of health. I have his letter in return, in which he guarantees that every care should be taken of the men, and that they should be transported by steamer to Baghdad and in carts beyond. I ascribe the blame and guilt of these cruelties to the German staff-officers with the Turks, and would exonerate Khalil Pacha entirely.

Large quantities of thick clothing had been sent off by rail to the prison camps by the American Embassy, in September, and 1,800 suits of heavy underclothes went off to Ras-al-Ain at the end of September. A large quantity of thick clothing started by rail on 12th October for Afion Kara Hissar.

My former residence on Halki became too cold at the end of September, so, on 19th October, I was transferred to the summer residence of the British Consul at Constantinople, Mr. Hamson,

on the island of Prinkipo. It was a sort of country vicarage house, situated on the cliffs on the north side of the island, with a very pretty and well-wooded garden about a quarter of a mile long and shut off from the road by a high wall.

The sea bathing at Halki had been a great treat, and every morning Morland, Tewfik and I, used to run down to the rocks and have the most delicious swims in the clear and beautiful blue sea. In my new house I found the same guard of Turkish sailors, and in addition a police station was installed next door.

On 14th November I received a wire from Sir George Armstrong, sent after the fall of Kut, with what looks like the date 20th May, 1916. It had evidently been sent by Head Quarters on the Tigris through the Turkish lines to me—and had reached me on this date! In my diary I have written: "Had I received this wire months ago, what anguish of mind it would have saved me!"

"*Auprès de l'armée Ottomane le Gouvernement Brittanique annonça au Parlement qu'il devait rester assuré qu'aucune circonstance relative à la défense si héroïque et si habile de Kut-al-Amara par le général Townshend ne manquera leur considération aussi sympathique que soigneuse. Etant au courant de tout, je suis persuadé que votre position actuelle, votre renommé, et votre avenir ne laissent rien à désirer.*"

"2nd March, 1917, Friday.* It is now known officially that Kut-al-Amara has been retaken by the British, though it has been rumoured here since 26th February. There had been heavy fighting in its neighbourhood at Felahieh for two or three weeks previously, and the Turks have now retired above Kut-al-Amara. This is a consolation for me. The Turks tell me that Maude had over 100,000 men against 40,000 Turks at the outside, and say it was impossible to hold back the British any longer.

"12th March. It is rumoured that America has declared war against Germany.

"14th March, Wednesday. It is all over Constantinople that the British have taken Baghdad. This news seems correct. All the people are talking about it. There has been very heavy fighting. Tewfik has been told the British have 7 divisions and 500 guns. A considerable difference in size from the force I was given to take Baghdad with!

"I have been given the papers from 19th January up to 22nd February, by the American Embassy. These included the breaking off of diplomatic relations between America and Germany."

The revolution in Russia came as very bad news to us on

* Excerpts taken direct from my diary are put between quotation-marks without further reference.

18th March, at Constantinople. All the Turks and Germans were radiant, and said that it was the end of the war, as the Entente could not continue without Russia.

The news of the fall of Baghdad cast a gloom over the Turks at Constantinople, though it was never officially announced. I was told by several officers that Maude's force consisted of seven divisions and 500 guns, say 90,000 combatants, and the Turkish forces were approximately the same as when Kut fell. No one thought of blaming the Turkish Commander-in-Chief in Mesopotamia—my old opponent Khalil Pacha, whose prestige was in no wise diminished. On 29th and 30th March, flags decorating the streets announced a defeat of the British in Syria, under General Sir Archibald Murray, at Gaza, on the 26th and 27th.

On 6th April it was announced that America had declared war against Germany. This painfully impressed the Turks as to the probable result of the war.

Constantinople was now (June, 1917) more and more German. German officers were in all Turkish regiments, in the War Office, and about the person of Enver Pacha, who was entirely under their thumb. The Turkish debt to Germany now amounted to four hundred million pounds, and it was impossible that it could ever be repaid.

On Fridays and Sundays I found it impossible to go out at Prinkipo on account of the German and Austrian holiday crowds. They were hand-in-glove with the Greeks and Jews of Constantinople, who in general paid great respect to the Germans. Friday, being the Turkish holiday, was kept by the Greeks in addition to Sunday, so that for two days a week Prinkipo was impossible. Morland and I used as a rule to walk round the island twice a day for exercise, beginning the day with a swim off the rocks in my garden and sometimes a sail, when Tewfik used to take us for a cruise on one of the yachts of the Naval School.

The profiteering at Constantinople was on a monstrous scale. Members of the Government made large fortunes rigging the sugar, or tobacco, or mutton, or potato markets.

"22nd July. General Falkenhayn has arrived at Constantinople, and I am told he is to command the German-Turk forces in Asia Minor, with a mission of retaking Baghdad.

"Two English aeroplanes visited Constantinople the other night. They nearly succeeded in bombing the *Goeben*, and they sank one Turkish destroyer, killing some 26 men and wounding ten more, damaged another destroyer and nearly got the German liner *General*, which was also lying in the Golden Horn and accommodating a large number of German staff-officers."

On 5th August I saw the English papers and read about the Mesopotamian Inquiry in the London press. It was admitted

and proved that a committee of politicians, unbacked and unsupported by expert military opinion, overruled military warning by the War Office, and found that my advance on Baghdad with 13,000 combatants (of whom only 8,500 were bayonets) was most desirable, although I should be nearly four hundred miles from the sea with no support! Moreover, Mesopotamia was a secondary theatre, and on principle should have been held on the defensive with a minimum force so as to strengthen our forces in France, the principal theatre.

On 11th August I had an interview with Enver Pacha at the Admiralty. We had a long talk, and he was very friendly. He told me that I should have gone home to England a year before but for the Germans, who would not agree.

"I wanted to send you home directly after Kut," he said, "but the truth is, General, that the Germans would not hear of it, saying you were *un haut personnage* in England, and your arrival would have a political effect!"

On 12th August I swam from my garden on the island of Prinkipo across the Halki Channel to the Naval School on the island of Halki, at least a mile and a quarter, in forty minutes. This beat my swim round St. Michael's Mount in Cornwall in 1895, just after I had come home from Chitral. About this time I began to be shadowed by plain clothes police to a greater extent than I had been during my captivity. I used often to amuse myself at Prinkipo by giving these detectives the slip during a walk, and, climbing the hills, drop down on the other side of the ridge and go home by a different way.

"24th September. Haidar Pacha, the railway station at Skutari, was destroyed by a great fire last night. From Prinkipo, one could see at dusk flames darting upwards in great tongues of fire. The fire originated by a steam crane lifting bombs out of a lighter on a quay, alongside the railway station, breaking. There was an explosion, and instantly the great station was in flames. Trains loaded with petrol were waiting to proceed to Aleppo for the Baghdad expedition. About 1,000 people lost their lives. There were great quantities of ammunition and projectiles in the station, and the shells went off like rockets, and the projectiles fell among the shipping in the Bosphorus. The damage done is estimated at five million pounds."

I have stated that I had been careful not to give my parole. Enver Pacha had told me I was free to go whenever I wished, all he said he would ask me was to tell him if I felt I could no longer remain.

Directly I had made up my mind to go I conveyed to Enver Pacha in at least half a dozen letters on the question of getting exchanged, etc., that I could no longer live the life of a prisoner

of war, that the mental strain was too much for me, that if I didn't get home and to work again I should go mad. I ought to mention that his promise that I could go where I liked was a farce. I was most carefully watched, and could not go to Constantinople without taking one of the two Turkish aide-de-camps with me. They lunched and dined with us and stayed in the same house, while some naval seamen, under the name of orderlies for my use, were in reality a guard over me.

I now began to think over the whole situation and I determined to escape *coûte que coûte*, for I had no hope whatever of an exchange. It will be understood that there are obvious reasons which prevent my giving the story of the three efforts I made to escape, when the events happened so recently as the summer of 1918, and therefore might involve people who helped me at Constantinople. It is sufficient to say that the efforts were exciting but unsuccessful, owing to bad luck, force of circumstances, and the Turkish habit of procrastination. At the same time the attempts were not discovered by the Turkish authorities or by the officers in charge of me.

Far from relaxing my determination to escape, I put a new plan on foot at the end of August, and reckoned it would take a month to arrange. In my diary I find : " We have another iron in the fire, thank God ! This will not depend upon aircraft and weather conditions but on *ourselves*, on our right arms and rifles."

About this time British aircraft frequently raided Constantinople, but no feeling was aroused amongst the Turkish population, who openly said, " You see, the British are not the people to burn our city. *They* respect the lives of innocent women and children." The only effect this had was to get me watched more carefully, for the frequent presence of aeroplanes caused the Turks to discuss the possibilities of my escape by seaplane, and on two occasions there were actually reports in the papers that I had escaped in this manner.

My failure in the three efforts alluded to made me all the more determined to escape ; life was no longer possible in the mental hell I was going through. Morland was of the same mind, and we had now made sound arrangements and a sound plan ; we had our revolvers, plenty of ammunition, and a band of some twenty brigands was hired and a boat procured and concealed on the coast opposite Mitylene. We were to reach the shore of the Sea of Marmara near Panderma, and there join the brigands, who would have ponies and mules ready for the ride across the ninety miles to the coast and the concealed boat in which we could pull across to the island of Mitylene.

We had considered a scheme of reaching the Caucasus *viâ* Batoum, but the above plan was eventually adopted as being the simplest. But it took a long while to arrange, for Never

Do To-day What You Can Put Off Until To-morrow is the favourite proverb of Turkey.

On 28th August a great fire broke out in the city of Constantinople, and raged for two days. About 20,000 houses were burnt and thousands of people rendered homeless.

It was at the end of August that a very influential Turk, who was well in with the Government and Enver, told me confidentially that the Turks would never let me go; they had amused me with promises and honourable treatment. "Whatever convention is made as to an exchange of prisoners of war (which was talked of at the time) they will hang on to you." He said he knew what he was talking about; it had often been discussed amongst the members of the Turkish Government, and "they intend to use you as a hostage if the worst comes to the worst."

I had not the slightest doubt of the truth of what the Pacha said, and it made me quits with Enver, who had fed me with stories of how he wanted to let me go but the Germans would not allow it, and so forth, *ad infinitum*.

The War Office under Enver was no improvement on the War Office of Nazim Pacha, assassinated before the war. The only difference was that in place of the peaceful, siesta-like calm of the pre-war administration, bustle and confusion were mistaken for the activity of business.

The scandals connected with the Quartermaster-General's department at the Turkish War Office during my captivity were extraordinary. The Quartermaster-General had made himself a millionaire by corrupt dealings with those who furnished the army with supplies, munitions, arms, and equipment; young Turkish officers in his department, known not to possess a fourpenny-piece before the war, used now to buy villas at Prinkipo for several thousands of pounds. A Turkish staff-officer himself told me of one of the transactions of a certain Turkish general that he witnessed, when the general was contracting to feed an army corps :—

"What is your price for dates?" he asked an Arab contractor.

"Two piastres the oke."

"Well, I'll give you six piastres the oke, if you will give me a receipt at twelve piastres!"

So everyone was pleased.

The state of corruption was appalling. The Turkish Air Force consisted of a very few machines and an enormous number of officers, in a fantastic uniform, which was more suited to musical comedy than air work. Being generally the sons of well-to-do business men they simply joined the Air Force in order to remain in the restaurants at Pera and get out of going to one of the fronts, more especially the dreaded ones of Syria and Mesopotamia. Even the contemptible

Constantinople press openly drew attention to this scandal, when the British were continually raiding the city from their base at Mudros.

We were in a jeweller's shop in Pera one day, when a Turk came in, who wished to buy a gold watch chain. The German woman who owned the shop asked him eighteen liras! Whereupon the Turk remonstrated, saying that the chain was not worth more than five or six liras (or pounds). "If you give me three golden liras you shall have the chain," said the woman, "but the price is eighteen if you pay in paper notes."

If one took a British gold sovereign or a gold Turkish lira and sold it in the market one could get five lira notes. The official rate of exchange was 130 piastres for the lira, owing to Germany having put a fictitious value on the lira note, since she had lent Turkey well over four hundred millions of liras. When we wanted money in Constantinople we used to cash an English cheque either with the Minister of the Netherlands, or with Mr. J. A. Sykes, an English merchant who remained there.

"22nd September. A raid of British aeroplanes over Constantinople last night, the fusillade of anti-aircraft guns lasted for a quarter of an hour. One of the machines, a seaplane, came down with engine trouble after the raid on the sea close to Malteppe, a little town on the Asiatic shore opposite Prinkipo; the three officers in her were taken prisoners.

"London papers up to 7th September show that the Germans are being heavily punched by the Allied armies under Foch and have lost 150,000 prisoners! Which shows me they are in full retreat. The whole of Germany is now completely upset and their Parliament declares that the time has passed when Cabinet secrecy and secret measures can be permitted. There are 29,000 German soldier deserters in Berlin. Two divisions (one Bavarian and the other Silesian) have had to be sent back from the front to Germany for open mutiny. There has also been a mutiny amongst the crews of submarines."

My diary of 25th, 26th and 27th September, is taken up with the plan of escape which was now nearly ready.*

"28th September, Saturday. The Turks and Germans have had a regular beating from Allenby in Syria and their army is in full flight. The English have taken Damascus! This is of great political effect, Damascus coming second only to Constantinople. Thus all Syria is now in the hands of the British. The Bulgarians have been heavily defeated by our Salonica Army and are in full retreat. Bulgaria has proposed an armistice to the commander of the Salonica Army. This has caused consternation in Turkey. Ministers sat in council here all yesterday and last night; troops are being hurried to

* These diaries I hope to publish at some future date.

the frontier. The Turks talk openly against the Germans, except perhaps the actual government party, and it is hinted that Enver himself is changing his opinion about them. The actual majority of the Turks are for the Entente, but all fear the German bayonets at Constantinople. As far as I can ascertain, the German garrison at Constantinople is a division, grouped in mixed detachments in the suburbs on both sides of the Bosphorus, so as to control the city, if necessary, by moving in small columns.

" The few war-ships are practically all in the hands of the Germans. In fact, the German garrison at Constantinople controls the place as absolutely as Junot controlled Lisbon when he occupied that city in 1808 ; but aid from the British outside would render the recapture of the place easy.

" 1st October, 1918. It appears that the Salonica army is advancing on Sofia, and that the Bulgarians are retiring and are asking for peace. The Germans are said to be sending troops from Rumania, and the Austrians are sending troops into Serbia. Turkey has reinforced the lines of Tchataldja and Gallipoli by using up the first army, which leaves no one in reserve. Malinoff, who has made the demand for peace, remains at the head of affairs in Bulgaria. King Ferdinand has apparently nothing to say in the matter. The Anglo-Franco-Serbo-Greek army, called the " Salonica Army," I do not think reaches a total of 400,000, and I am told that there was no battle to speak of. The Bulgarian Army started a retreat, and Malinoff at once asked for an armistice, preliminary to peace. The French Commander-in-Chief, Franchet d'Espérey, naturally would not grant an armistice, but invited them to send responsible representatives, which was done. It all looks to me as if Bulgaria for some time past had determined to change over to the Entente."

CHAPTER XX

THE ARMISTICE WITH TURKEY

On 3rd October, 1918, I went to Therapia from Prinkipo, in response to a telegram from the Egyptian Izzet Pacha, asking me to come and lunch with him at his villa. He met me at the Galata Bridge, at Pera, on my arrival from Prinkipo, with a motor-car, and we drove to Therapia, a most enjoyable trip. I soon learnt from him that the Bulgarians had made an armistice with the French Commander of the Salonica Army, and had engaged to remain with ordered arms till the end of the war, when Bulgaria's claims, interests, and fate would be decided by the Entente Powers. Their armies were to be demobilised, and guns and munitions were to be magazined in charge of British officers.

He told me that the excitement amongst the Turks at Constantinople was tremendous. It was felt that, in order to carry out their ambition and curry favour with the Entente, the Bulgars might attack the Turks and take Constantinople. There was also a strong rumour that the Turkish Government had resigned. I myself saw at Galata Bridge a Turkish battalion on the march to the famous Tchataldja lines, which cover Constantinople on the land side, and a large number of troops had already left for them. There was every sign of movement and excitement, and we saw groups of German sanitation officers conversing in the streets. I was told by Izzet Pacha that it was said in influential quarters that I should now be sent by the Turkish Government to treat for peace with the British Government, and he had wanted to tell me at once. I told him, as we discussed the matter at lunch, that I should like nothing better, but should demand complete liberty as a condition of helping in the matter. I should hope to get a promise from the British of no annexation of Turkish territory in Europe or in Turkey in Asia proper ; but the Turks must open the Dardanelles, and Constantinople would have to be a free port. The kingdom of the Hedjaz might be maintained on its own responsibility ; Basra and Baghdad would have to be free ports with free trading and no restrictions, and there should be a British resident and guard in Baghdad. Otherwise, in my opinion, Turkey should be left alone.

There is no one to put in the place of the Turks. They should be left on our road to India, for they are too weak to do us harm.

They have had enormous losses in the war ; even greater than their losses in battle have been those from disease due to neglect of their food and pay by government.

There were at least 300,000 Turkish deserters in Asia Minor in September, 1918, who were the terror of the country. I know this from Turkish War Office sources, for the Turks discussed these appalling figures with me with perfect frankness. Raouf Bey, who was Minister of Marine when I left Constantinople on my mission to the British Fleet, assured me that there were not 20,000 Turkish troops in front of Allenby when the latter was approaching Aleppo. These 300,000 deserters were roaming the country as great bands of brigands of the type of the Spanish guerillas in the Peninsular War. They prevented all government and order, and even sacked towns and levied money from the local authorities. In September, the town of Panderma was held up by a considerable number of these men—deserters from the 5th army—and £60,000 in lira notes was burnt at the Municipal Hall, since the brigands regarded paper money as of no value. Some German officers were also stripped naked and severely beaten, whilst the Austrians were not touched. The brigands menaced Talaat Pacha, saying that if he did not make peace they would march on Constantinople and sack it. Such was the situation of Turkey in September, 1918.

As an example of the terrorism created by these brigands even in the environs of Constantinople, I may say that my aide-de-camp, Tewfik Bey, possessed a farm at a distance of ten or twelve miles from Skutari, and he was unable to send out to it and bring in wood for fuel. He could not send two or three naval orderlies alone, as they would have been shot on the way or made prisoners by the brigands. No party under a strength of twenty rifles could be sent—and more often than not these parties fraternized with the brigands and joined their bands.

For the past two or three months I had let no opportunity pass of pointing out to Turks with whom I conversed—and they were many and influential—that their only hope of salvation was to make peace with England, and I knew that my conversations were repeated to the head of the party that was now plotting to overthrow Enver Pacha. They told me that he had offered his resignation to the Sultan about 15th September, and that it had been accepted, with the resignation of Talaat Pacha, who said he would go if Enver did.

I constantly pointed out to the Turks that the grouping of the German troops round Constantinople was so designed as to favour the dividing up of the city into sections, whilst the guns of the ships dominated the city. These officers talked to other Turks, and in the end my arguments had great results.

The Germans and Austrians were now endeavouring in every

way to bring about peace by means of speeches by public men in their press propaganda. What a change in the German talk ! It was all defensive, no longer that of the conqueror, and the " Gord 'elp us " speeches of the Kaiser were quite pathetic, leading one to suppose that he was a subject for prayers in churches.. There was obviously a strong party in Germany opposed to the Kaiser, as he stood in the way of peace ; Austria was prepared to " rat," and I was convinced that she would do so on the first opportunity.

On 7th October I was told that Enver, Talaat, and the whole of the Cabinet had resigned, and Tewfik Pacha and Marshal Izzet Pacha had been sent for by the Sultan to form a new Ministry. The Turks still hoped that the Entente would grant an armistice to the Central Powers on the principles of President Wilson's Fourteen Points, but I argued that it was impossible for the Entente to grant an armistice on all fronts, merely to enable the Central Powers to get breath and dig themselves in. I laughed at the very idea. " It is impossible," I said, " for the British, French and American armies to grant an armistice to the Germans, unless the latter will evacuate French and Belgian territory. The only hope for Turkey is to copy Malinoff, by which course of action you will certainly get as good terms as Bulgaria. You should do this at once." This is the line I took with Tewfik Bey, who came across from Constantinople that evening to see me.

On 12th October, whilst in my garden at Prinkipo, I heard of the fall of the Enver-Talaat Ministry, and was informed that Marshal Izzet Pacha was to be Grand Vizier and War Minister in the new Cabinet. I at once sent Izzet Pacha a letter suggesting an interview, and saying that I thought there was no time for delay. I also sent word on 15th October to Raouf Bey, the newly appointed Minister of Marine, whom I knew well, and as a friend, that I was willing to assist the Turkish Government to negotiate with the British, in return for the honourable way in which I had been treated during my captivity. I flattered myself that they would have confidence in my ability to conduct such a mission, and would have equal confidence in the genuineness of my endeavour to obtain honourable terms for their country. If the Turkish Government thought well of my offer, not a moment should be lost in sending me to the British Fleet. But I required my personal liberty before I departed. This message went by the hand of Tewfik Bey, who was a great friend of Raouf Bey, the Minister of Marine, and had originally introduced him to me. The above facts will show that I had made good during my captivity with men who had now come into power on Enver's downfall.

If I brought about this armistice successfully, I told Tewfik Bey, there was no doubt whatever that Austria would also at once cast off the German tow-rope, and in this I was right. I

knew Tewfik Bey would repeat this to Raouf Bey, the Minister of Marine.

On the evening of 16th October, Tewfik Bey returned from Constantinople with a message from Marshal Izzet Pacha, that he wished to see me at the Sublime Porte on the following day at 2.30 p.m.

Accordingly, I went to Constantinople with Tewfik Bey. I had jotted down in my pocket-book the conditions I proposed, whilst sitting in the cabin of the launch taking me across from Prinkipo to the Sublime Porte.

"Will Turkey accept ?—

1. Opening of the Dardanelles and Bosphorus to British Fleet.
2. Autonomous rule in Mesopotamia and Syria under the sovereignty of the Sultan, like Bavaria, Saxony, Württemberg, etc., i.e., a Confederation of States.
3. Would the same apply to the Caucasus ?
4. The troops of the Entente to evacuate Mesopotamia and Syria.
5. The frontiers of Turkey in Europe to remain as settled and defined in the Treaty of London.
6. Prisoners of war, British and Indian, to be released at once, assembled at Smyrna and sent to Chios by boat."

On arriving at the Sublime Porte, I was at once taken to Izzet Pacha, in the Grand Wazirat. The Field-Marshal is a man of about sixty-three years of age, strong and hale—known as a good tactician and manœuvrer in battle, a good general, and immensely popular in the army. He greeted me warmly and we talked alone. He said that he had been called on to take the helm at a time and in a situation which were none of his seeking, and for which he was not responsible. With tears in his eyes he said that he found his beloved country in a terrible condition.

We soon came to the point. He said, "Then you are willing to help us ?"

I replied, "With all my heart."

He said that Raouf Bey had informed him of the contents of my letter. His one idea was to save his country from ruin, because he came of a family that had always respected England and the English—he remembered what England had done for Turkey in the Crimea. It was a *crime*, he said, with emphasis, for Turkey to have made war on England, and he referred bitterly to the Enver party that had done so.

I spoke of my willingness to help Turkey, and he said he had every confidence in me and would send me at once. I was free,

and he was glad to give me my liberty. He did not specify any conditions he desired for Turkey, but merely gave me to understand that he relied on my efforts to get honourable terms.

I said that the only way which I thought would make England agree at once was to open the Dardanelles. I was careful not to mention the question of the Gallipoli forts, which of course must be occupied by the Allies as well, for no Admiral could trust himself with a fleet in the Sea of Marmara if the Turks remained in occupation of the forts.

Izzet Pacha, who seemed very upset the whole time at the grave position his country was in, replied that the Turkish Government would be willing to open the Dardanelles, if England was ready to protect Turkey. He asked when I should be ready to start.

I replied that I was ready to start at once. I hoped he would send me right away that night, for there was not a moment to be lost, since the British Fleet was even then concentrated at Lemnos.

He was quite in accord with me, not a moment was to be lost.

I told him I hoped to reach England in seven days, *viâ* the Dardanelles. He said he was not certain if he could send me by that route, as many German officers were there, and he did not want them to know. His predecessors had delivered the Turks into the hands of the Germans, and they were everywhere. He thought that *viâ* Smyrna would be the best way. I argued for the Dardanelles on the ground of rapidity, and because the British Mediterranean Fleet was there. If it were contemplating action in conjunction with the Anglo-Greek army, which I believed had crossed the Maritza (he did not contradict this), my arrival might delay matters. I said that such an attack would cause a crisis at Constantinople, and that was to be avoided at all costs.

He entirely agreed with me, and said he would consult with Raouf Bey and his other colleagues and see if they could not manage the Dardanelles route (he seemed impressed by what I said about the Fleet outside the Dardanelles).

I added that it appeared to me that the importance of my meeting the Fleet outweighed even the risk of the Germans finding out that a flag of truce had gone out—not to speak of the advantage in rapidity.

I asked him if it would not be best to wire the reply of the British Government to the Turkish Embassy in Switzerland to save time. He said it would, and gave me the address of the Military Attaché, Colonel Khalil Bey, whom he could trust, and who had already received his instructions in the matter.

He said he would send Raouf Bey, the Minister of Marine, and perhaps also the Minister of the Interior, in a launch to Prinkipo to see me that night. He added, "You will start to-morrow at the latest."

He shook hands with me very warmly, and spoke of my defence of Kut, which he admired as much as Plevna, with which he compared it; and he said the soldier they honoured most in Turkey was Osman Pacha, the hero of Plevna, although —like Kut—that place had fallen.

The interview then ended. I was very touched by Izzet Pacha's kindness, his reception of me, and, above all, by his confidence in my efforts to help Turkey. I came out of the Sublime Porte free, and feeling a new man.

I went back to Prinkipo at 5 p.m., and as I watched the minarets of Constantinople sink astern I reflected how strangely I had been instrumental in accomplishing by diplomacy the object which I had been unable to accomplish when I was sent with my handful of men to take Baghdad.

Had I not cause to feel glad and proud? Izzet Pacha had agreed to open the Dardanelles. The Straits of Gallipoli, the Sea of Marmara, and the Bosphorus would be in our hands in a few days, and the 20,000 German troops at Constantinople would have to surrender or be removed by a convention. Turkey would be taken out of the war, and Austria also would in all probability make peace. I was now free—nor had I forgotten my gallant men in captivity, for I had stipulated for their freedom, which also Izzet Pacha had accorded.

At 10.30 p.m., Raouf Bey arrived at my house at Prinkipo, and we had a conversation for about two hours, during which he stated Turkey's armistice conditions, which we discussed over our cigarettes and coffee.

"1. Turkey wants to be friends with England and demands her protection.
2. England is to stop active operations at once.
3. The Turkish Government is ready to give autonomy to territories under the sovereignty of the Sultan occupied by the Allies; England is to defend this system of government.
4. Financial, political and industrial independence for Turkey.
5. Financial help, to tide over a crisis, if needed by Turkey."

He informed me that the Germans were trying to foment civil war between the two political parties in Constantinople, and that they would take action with a view to getting possession of the place with their troops and warships. They were mobilising the Black Sea Fleet, but the Turkish Government intended to take secret measures which would prevent it from passing through the Bosphorus, while military counter-measures were already prepared. Raouf's talk convinced me that the Turkish Government might at any time ask assistance of the British Fleet.

Raouf told me I was to pick up Rahmy Bey's steam yacht

about 8 a.m. in the channel between Halki and Andigoni Islands the next morning. Rahmy Bey, the Governor of Smyrna, was charged with conducting me there, and putting me on the island of Chios, where were British warships and a Greek garrison. A special train would take me from Panderma to Smyrna. Izzet Pacha desired me to wire from Chios to the British Government, giving a hint of the situation in Turkey, and he emphasised the fact that the Turks wanted to make peace with the British and desired British protection. Raouf asked me to report any progress to Chios. This would give confidence to the Turkish Government. He said that the plan of reporting to Colonel Khalil Bey in Switzerland would not do.

Raouf Bey also said that the British must not try to force the Dardanelles, for that would cause chaos in Constantinople. "God knows what will happen then. Turkey only wants to be friends with the British, and it is surely to England's interest to encourage this. The whole thing must be a *fait accompli* before it is talked about. If we want help, we will call on the British and open the Dardanelles. Leave us alone till then. In short, treat us like gentlemen, and we will be loyal."

As regarded the possibility of a financial crisis, Germany had lent Turkey about five hundred million pounds, paper. Thus Turkey's financial credit was based on Germany's, and, if Germany was beaten and her credit shattered, so was Turkey's. It would be a good investment for England, as she would have a first call on the money that Turkey had put aside to repay the German loan.

"Let England do things quietly and trust Turkey as a gentleman; that is what Turkey will appreciate."

Raouf Bey told me that Aleppo had not yet fallen, but the English were drawing near, and they would march into the town without opposition. "We are not resisting," he said, "we haven't 20,000 men to resist Allenby's 80,000. Of our three armies—the 4th, 7th and 8th—the 7th and 8th are wiped out or taken, and only the wreck of the fourth army remains. There is desertion on a large scale, and, in the recent fighting with the British in Syria, large numbers ran and wouldn't fight at all."

Raouf left me about 1 a.m. and went back to Constantinople in his launch, after a most friendly good-bye. He begged me to do my best for Turkey, reminding me that they had treated me well and honourably. We promised to meet again soon.

My feelings of excitement can be imagined as I walked back to my house, and realised how the servants were busy packing up for our departure in the morning.

"18th October. Accompanied by Captain Morland and Tewfik Bey, two British orderlies, my Indian servant Simon, and our baggage, I rowed off to the channel between Halki and Prinkipo. At noon, the yacht arrived with Rahmy Bey on

board, and we steamed for the port of Panderma on the Sea of Marmara, where we arrived at 6 p.m. We left in the Governor of Smyrna's special train an hour later.

" 19th October. Arrived at Smyrna at midday. The whole place turned out to see the Governor of Smyrna, with whom I was travelling. The streets of the town were crowded, and there were acclamations and cheers as the Governor, with me at his side, and the English inhabitant here, Mr. Whittal, passed in the motor. I was astonished at this. Mr. Whittal told me that all Smyrna knew I was arriving, and that they knew it meant peace."

The Governor took me to lunch with Mr. Whittal's family at his house, some way out of the town in the " English Village." There were about twenty people at lunch. Not much secret about my leaving Turkey !

In the street I met Captain Munday, of the Oxford Light Infantry, who was at a prisoners' camp a few miles out of Smyrna, and Rahmy Bey permitted me to take him with me.

At 2 p.m. I was to start in a Turkish Government tug, but owing to delays about the baggage it was not until 3.30 that we got under way, proceeding down the Gulf of Smyrna, and shaping a course for Mitylene, where we expected to find a British war-ship. As I was not going to risk being stopped by the Germans, I insisted on trying to pass through the mine-field at night, since there was a fine moon, and the sea was like a mill-pond. The Turkish naval officer in charge of the tug remonstrated, saying, " But, your Excellency, if we touch a mine and you are injured, I shall be tried by court martial." I replied that neither he nor I would know much about it afterwards if we did touch one, so we would take the risk. We passed through five lines of mines.

" 20th October. At 3 a.m. we arrived at the harbour of Mitylene town, not having seen a vessel. After whistling twice, a motor-boat came off with a British naval officer, who hailed us : ' Who are you ? '

" I called out : ' General Townshend.'

" ' Good God ! I am glad to see you, sir.'

" I am once more under the British Flag."

I wired to the Admiral Commanding the Fleet, asking him to send a fast vessel to take me to him ; to Admiral Wemyss in London, to tell my wife I had been liberated and was on my way to London. I sent a similar telegram to the Secretary of the War Office, and, later, a long statement of Turkey's position and proposals to the Foreign Office.

" 20th October (continued). Arrived at Mudros at 3 p.m. I went on board the Admiral's ship. Admiral the Hon. Sir Arthur Calthorpe, Commander-in-Chief in the Mediterranean, and Rear-Admiral Sir Michael Culme-Seymour gave me a hearty welcome. I had a telegram from the Chief of the Imperial

General Staff, saying that I was to remain at Mudros until further orders, and that my presence must be kept as secret as possible."

I remained on the fleet as a guest of Admiral Seymour. The Turkish delegates arrived on 26th October, and were quartered on board the battleship *Agamemnon*, and the conference began on the following day.

The Turkish delegates were Raouf Bey, the Minister of Marine, Saad Ullah, a Colonel of the Turkish General Staff from Aleppo, and Rechard Hikmat Bey. Tewfik Bey, of the Turkish Navy, who, it will be remembered, had been my naval aide-de-camp at Constantinople during my captivity, and had accompanied me to the fleet, came with them.

I cannot, of course, say what occurred at this conference. I was not asked to make one of it, but I remained with the fleet whilst the business proceeded in order to help if matters came to a deadlock.

My own ideas on the situation are shown in the following unofficial memorandum, drawn up for Mr. Montagu, the Secretary of State for India, on my return to England :—

" 15th November, 1918

" Dear Mr. Montagu,

In discussing the question of Turkey at a Peace Conference, it should be understood that the majority of the respectable Turks have been for England throughout the war. That is an undeniable fact. The party of 'Union and Progress,' under the leadership of Enver and Talaat, who seized the power, was bought by German gold. The ' Union and Progress ' party is utterly corrupt, and has done nothing during the war but attend to their own private fortunes from the financial point of view.

" Enver, Talaat & Co., ruled absolutely by *fear*. Anyone who opposed them disappeared at once, following the method of the Sultan, Abdul Hamid.

" It should also be remembered that the Turkish peasants and working population are an honest race, and should not be punished for the crimes committed by their Government.

" Bearing the above in mind, I should—had I a voice in the matter—treat Turkey on the following broad lines of Strategy and Politics, endeavouring to prevent the two from clashing; for otherwise, if Politics interfere with Strategy, all history is here to prove that disaster is the result in the majority of cases. At the same time, it should be borne in mind that Izzet Pacha, the Marshal, Grand Vizier and Minister of War, is, and always has been, friendly to England. In the interview when he gave me my liberty, he asked if I would help Turkey, and said that he came of a family that had always respected England, and that remembered the Crimean War and the policy of Lord

Beaconsfield. He said, in answer to my question whether he was ready to open the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus, that he was ready to do so ; that he was ready to give autonomy to the occupied territories (Mesopotamia and Syria), but under the sovereignty of the Sultan, adding that we could take what guarantees we liked. All that Turkey wanted, he said, was the *protection* of England. He thought that it was better for England to have Turkey on her road to the East—Turkey, who would be a faithful and obedient ally—instead of some power which eventually would become a thorn in the side of England. 'But,' he said, 'we could not accept dishonourable terms ; we are not Bulgarians. We have ideas of honour, and, rather than accept dishonourable terms, we will put our backs to the wall and fight. You know what the Turks can do when driven to it, for you have fought against them. Do not drive us out of Constantinople or Turkey in Europe, where we have been settled for centuries, for this it is impossible for us to accept.'

"I must say that I agree with everything that the Marshal said, on broad principles. I can see no advantage in placing Bulgarians in Turkey in Europe ; I can see no advantage in placing Greeks there, who would be kicked out in five minutes unless they had British bayonets to support them. It seems much more advantageous to me to keep the Turk on our road to the East.

"He is ready also, Raouf Bey, Minister of Marine, told me, to make Constantinople a free port ; and, with that great commercial advantage, with access to the Black Sea, and the great strategical advantage of the Dardanelles, Gallipoli, and the Bosphorus in our hands, we have all Turkey at our feet. I see no advantage whatever in the occupation of towns in the interior of Turkey in Asia. On the contrary, I see a great strategical error, for it means dissemination—in other words, a violation of the greatest of the six fundamental principles of war, namely, Economy of Force.

"Following the same argument, I would certainly not occupy Macedonia or Syria, where we should only lock up troops for no purpose, especially when it is remembered that the possession of the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus puts Turkey in our hand.

"If it is considered by Government desirable to hold a portion of Mesopotamia, then I should retain the Province of Basra, which might be made a free port ; but, having the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean, I personally see no great necessity to hold Basra.

"The Turkish Government no doubt will want financial assistance. Raouf Bey informed me that they would try to do without it ; but he said that, owing to the five hundred millions of Turkish *paper* loaned to Turkey by Germany, there will probably be a financial crisis. Of course, it requires an expert

to deal with questions of finance, but from an outsider's point of view it seems to me not a bad speculation, because we could take the first claim on Turkish repayment, tapping that money which they have set aside for paying off the German debt. Moreover, we should naturally take over all the railways and the commerce, establishing our merchants in Constantinople to trade, and so take back in many ways money we have advanced.

"As regards Armenia, I should treat this question, had I a voice in the matter, by placing a British Resident, on the lines of our diplomacy in India, to see that the people were not oppressed. I know well—and I may say no one better—all the horrors that have been perpetrated on the Armenian people, but it must be remembered that the Armenian question has been to the Turk what the Irish question has been to England. The Armenians, much as I sympathise with their wrongs, have invariably intrigued against the Turk, with the Russians and with the English, on every possible occasion. The Turk *au fond* is a barbarian and his methods of dealing with sedition are not as Louis Quatorze-like as our House of Commons.

"It is on these broad lines above indicated that I would treat the question of Turkey at a Peace Conference, had I any voice in the matter.

Yours sincerely,

CHARLES V. F. TOWNSHEND."

I had a conversation with Colonel Newcombe, R.E., on 27th October, at Mudros. He had been a prisoner of war in Turkey and had passed through many vicissitudes, being recaptured in an attempt to escape, and had finally got away. He told me that the day after I left Constantinople "secretly" my departure was announced in the press! Which shows that the Turkish Government itself had made it public, and accounts for my public reception at Smyrna. This dispensed with the necessity for my own government insisting on the fact that I had arrived at Mudros being kept secret.

On 29th October, the Conference was suspended for the Turkish delegates to refer the question of the occupation of the Gallipoli forts to the Sublime Porte. They had agreed to the opening of the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus.

On 30th October the armistice between Great Britain and her Allies and Turkey was signed at night on board the *Agamemnon*. At about 11 p.m., when on board the Admiral's yacht, the *Triad*, I received a message asking me to go on board the *Agamemnon*, to see Raouf Bey. (The Conference had resumed its sitting at 9 p.m.). My impression was that some deadlock had occurred.

When I arrived on board the *Agamemnon* I found that the

armistice had just been signed, and all the delegates, British and Turkish, were delighted. Raouf Bey nearly shook my hand off, saying, "Turkey will never be able sufficiently to show her gratitude to you for having made peace possible, and we only ask you to visit Constantinople and to bring Lady Townshend with you." He also asked me to go to his cabin with him, as he had something to tell me in private. He then said he hoped I would see Lord Curzon and tell him that Turkey could be counted on as a faithful ally to England; that the Sultan had told him when leaving Constantinople that he *must* make peace with England. They hoped we should assist them financially—not a large sum, but sufficient to tide over a crisis, for Germany was sure to try to create financial difficulties for Turkey.

"We can be trusted," he said, "to give equal rights to Greeks and Armenians from all points of view, for Turkey cannot exist unless it remains *united*. I leave it to you to explain this to Lord Curzon, for you are well aware of the whole situation and the necessity of preventing all internal strife. Turkey has no intention of interfering in any way with the Arabs. They can have autonomy, but you know as well as I do that the Arabs are not capable of ruling themselves, and that this autonomy ought to be under the suzerainty of the Sultan."

After thanking him for all the kindness he had shown me in my captivity, I said good-bye to Raouf Bey, and he and the other Turkish delegates left on board a cruiser at 1 a.m.

The premature surrender of Turkey can be considered without any exaggeration as shortening the war by several months, saving millions of money and thousands of lives, to use the words of Monsieur Clemenceau, whom I saw in Paris. Such was the result on Austria and Germany of the sudden collapse of Turkey in October, 1918, for it must be remembered that the German Ambassador at Constantinople knew of my departure to make peace for the Turks the very next morning, and wired to Germany accordingly. The Turks could have gone on resisting Allenby fully four or five months, perhaps longer. But I am the last person to wish to minimise in any way the brilliant success of that great Commander, Edmund Allenby; I only want to make good my own humble share in bringing about peace.

CHAPTER XXI

CONCLUSION

After thanking Admirals Calthorpe and Seymour for their great kindness and hospitality to me during my stay, I embarked the next night, 31st October, on H.M. Cruiser *Forward*, commanded by Captain Bedford, to reach Taranto *viâ* the Corinth canal *en route* for Rome and Paris, on my way to London. I arrived at Rome on 3rd November, at 11.30 a.m., and found that Austria—as I thought she would—had quickly followed Turkey's example, and asked for peace.

I reached Paris on 5th November. Here I was joined by my wife, and we stayed at the Hotel Meurice for three or four days and were greeted by a large number of friends.

I was honoured by an interview with Monsieur Clemenceau, who congratulated me warmly on my work, and especially on bringing Turkey out of the war, saving, as he put it, millions of money and thousands of lives. During my interview a telegram arrived for him which he showed to me; it was from the Germans, asking if they could pass through the allied outposts to arrange an armistice.

I was very anxious to see Marshal Foch, whom I had known before the war and with whom I had discussed at length the possibility and probable manœuvre of the German offensive in the event of war, as far back as 1911.

Historians and statesmen often ascribe to generals who have been successful as commanders in the field such endowments as "prescience," "intuitive divination of the enemy's designs and movements," and so forth. These gifts, in the preternatural extent implied, exist only in the imaginations of the chroniclers. In this direction I have read statements in the above sense in the press lately as regards certain British generals having divined the German manœuvre through Belgium in 1914. The following anecdote will therefore be of interest, as showing that I heard the manœuvre in question discussed in 1911.

I had returned from my command in South Africa on promotion to the rank of Major-General, and had gone to see General Foch in his study at the Ecole de Guerre. I was accompanied by Commandant Mordacq, who had just been appointed to the Staff of Joffre, the Generalissimo of the French armies—and when I knew him first he was one of the professors

at the Ecole de Guerre under Foch. Mordacq is now a general and is Military Secretary to Monsieur Clemenceau. We had been friends in Paris at a time when I was studying the art of war very deeply, and we had often exchanged views in strategy; and Mordacq, who was a pupil of Foch, had honoured me by referring to my studies in strategy, and the Napoleonic doctrine in particular, in his book *La Stratégie —Historique—Evolution*, published in 1912. This book had followed his famous *Etudes Stratégiques*, published in 1910, which I had recommended most strongly to the notice of Lord Nicholson and Lord French. I consider that it had a great share in winning the war, for Mordacq's writings have been largely studied, and in many ways adopted, by our own General Staff and by those of Italy and Spain, and, I think of Bulgaria and Rumania also. In this direction I would refer also to his *Politique et Stratégie dans une Democratie*, published in 1912. This has only to be read for it to be clear that it played a great *rôle* in the war.

At that talk in Foch's study at the Ecole de Guerre, he showed on the great map how the Germans would concentrate 42 to 45 army corps on the line Cologne-Mülhausen, some 240 miles of front! "That is not a war," said Foch. "It is a Teutonic invasion." He showed us how the right wing of the German armies would come through Belgium in a wide and sweeping turning movement. There is a reason, he said, why England must come into the war, for is it to be imagined that, once the Prussians get into Belgium, they will ever go out again, unless they are thrown out? He asked me, as a student of strategy, what my remedy was for such a vast extent of front as the line Cologne-Mülhausen—how would Napoleon have treated it? I replied that he would have treated it by Strategic Penetration, i.e., he would have thrown his Principal Mass either against the centre, or one of the wings, since his favourite turning manœuvre against one of the enemy's flanks and rear was not possible in the case of such a vast extent of front. Foch quite agreed with my answer.

He discussed the three double lines of strategic railway which the Germans had constructed from Cologne and Coblenz to their strategic camp at Malmédy opposite Liège, and I remember that he also said, "There will be no war if England, France and Russia show their teeth, but they must be good teeth, and England's are not good; she will not make an army."

Needless to say I sent an account of this important interview to Field-Marshal Nicholson, then Chief of the Imperial Staff of the Army, to whom I was accustomed to write on strategical questions.

It was natural that I should be very eager to see the great Marshal Foch, who had now proved himself the first leader in Europe; I had an appointment to see him on the afternoon

École Supérieure
de Guerre

Le Général Commandant

Paris, le 22. 8 1911

Mon cher Général

Je suis heureux de la bonne nouvelle que vous me donnez de votre promotion au grade de Général Major - Elle vous arrive dans de magnifiques conditions de carrière - Je vous en fais mes compliments bien sincères - Je viens de mon côté d'être appelé au commandement de la 13e division, dans le 7e corps qui est à votre fils de l'Est - Je pars ce soir

of the same day as I saw Monsieur Clemenceau. But, in motoring out to the château where his Head Quarters were, I missed him, as he was suddenly called into Paris to see Monsieur Clemenceau, regarding the armistice with the Germans. I had to leave the next day, and so to my great regret I did not get a chance of seeing the Marshal.

I reached Victoria station on Saturday, 9th November, and had a warm welcome from a few of my friends and relations.

pour la diriger aux grandes manœuvres - Le Commandement me plaît tout à fait. Chaumont qui est mon quartier général n'est qu'à 4 heures de Paris. Je pourrai y venir de temps à autre surtout si je sais vous y rencontrer. Les petites dîners de vos manœuvres m'ont beaucoup intéressé. Vos troupes sont en très bonne voie de progrès d'instruction.

Veuillez, mon cher Général recevoir l'assurance de mes meilleurs sentiments

J. Foch

In my diary of 1911, I find two letters from General Foch to myself, which I think may prove of interest, and I also find under the date of 4th December :—" I had Generals de la Croix and Lyautey to lunch with me at 2 Rue Bassano. General de la Croix was Generalissimo last year in France, and, I know, enjoyed the entire confidence of the French General Staff. He has just had to retire for age. He impresses me as being a very able soldier with a deep knowledge of strategy and higher tactics. General Lyautey commands the army corps in Brittany, is supposed to be politically very ambitious, and, for French generals, is young-looking. During

our conversation Lyautey was glad to hear of my enthusiasm for General Foch's abilities. He said, 'I am entirely of your opinion.'"

Lyautey, it will be remembered, was at one time Minister of War and is now Governor-General of French North Africa; and everyone knows the able military articles by De la Croix in the "Temps" during the war.

Chaumont, le 6.11.1911.

7e Corps d'Armée, 13e Division.

Le Général.

Mon cher Général,

Votre aimable invitation à déjeûner à Paris m'a trouvé à Chaumont, dans l'impossibilité d'y répondre. Ma dépêche n'a pu vous dire, comme je le désire, tous mes regrets d'avoir manqué à votre rendez-vous. Votre lettre me fait espèrer que vous viendrez bientôt en France. Je pense même que vous viendrez à Chaumont. Prévenez-moi un peu à l'avance. Je serai tres heureux de vous y recevoir. Si vous y veniez, sans prévenir, vous risqueriez de me trouver absent. Ma division s'étend très loin. J'ai un régiment à Lons le Saulnier, 2 régiments à Besançon, indépendamment de deux autres régiments qui sont à Langres et à Chaumont. Nous faisons pendant l'hiver des manœuvres de garnison et des exercices de cadres. Je vais y assiter de temps à autre; celà me fait voyager beaucoup.

Je regrette beaucoup que vous n'ayez pu assister à nos grandes manœuvres. Elles ont eu, je trouve, une belle allure. Nous étions tout à fait prêts pour faire la guerre. Nous aurions fort. On aurait vu ce qui en serait résulté l'accord franco-allemand est signé. Mais le calme complet règne-t-il pour cela en Europe? En Angleterre ne voie-t-on pas déjà de nouveaux orages? Que va-t-il se passer à Constantinople ou dans les Balkans? Le printemps ne ramènera-t-il pas de nouvelles questions à résoudre peut-être à coups de canon? Je vous vois appelé au commandement des forces anglaises en Egypte bientôt, mais avant celà, ne croyez-vous pas à de nouvelles difficultés européennes?

Je vous fait mes compliments pour vos belles chasses à Champs. Cette année avec le commandement nouveau de ma division que j'ai pris le 16 août et celui de l'Ecole de Guerre que j'ai conservé en même temps jusqu'au 15 octobre, je n'ai pu tirer un coup de fusil, à mon grand regret.

Adieu, mon cher Général, à bientôt je pense. Croyez à tous mes meilleurs sentiments.

F. FOCH.

I have received hundreds of letters, from all conditions of people, showing sympathy and appreciation of my efforts. I quote that of Major-General Kemball, who was the Chief Staff Officer of Sir John Nixon, and afterwards, in command of a brigade, was engaged in the fighting to effect my relief at Kut.

" Flagstaff House, Mhow,
Central India,
22nd November, 1918.

" My dear Townshend,

" I was very glad to see in Reuter's that you had arrived safely at home, and had had a great reception in London.

" I hope that at the end of the war you will receive still higher recognition of your services, and that the gallant 6th Division may also be specially honoured.

" Nothing, however, can make up to you and them for your long and terrible captivity, and I can assure you that the fate of the gallant garrison of Kut was deeply felt by all.

" I also sympathise with you in having lost all further opportunity to show the great generalship you displayed until you were taken prisoner from no fault of your own. It was most unfortunate that Nixon's health broke down when it did, for I felt sure he would have got you out. . . . .

" However, the elements fought against us, and it was a difficult task under existing conditions. The troops were all right and fought most gallantly, in spite of very heavy losses, especially from machine-gun fire.

" Hoping that you are well.

Believe me,
Yours sincerely,
G. KEMBALL."

On reaching home I read, of course, the Mesopotamian Inquiry report in book form, and I had the satisfaction of seeing that I had come out of it with flying colours.

I attach letters from Lord George Hamilton, who was the President of that Inquiry, which are a source of consolation to me.

" 17 Montagu Street,
Portman Square, W.1.
18th November, 1918.

" Dear Sir Charles,

" I have been temporarily laid up with a slight attack of influenza, otherwise I should have given myself the pleasure of

calling upon you. Allow me, however, to congratulate you heartily upon your safe return to England, also upon the appreciation shown by the public of your splendid work in Mesopotamia. As Chairman of the Mesopotamia Commission, I wish to associate myself with that appreciation, and I was greatly pleased to read an account of an interview you had with some reporter in which the facts you state entirely tally with the Report of that Commission. I am afraid that the great bulk of the gallant garrison at Kut are no more, having died from privation or starvation.

" One fact was brought very prominently to the notice of the Commission, viz., that the splendid defence made at Kut so obliterated its ultimate surrender that our prestige gained rather than lost by the whole transaction.

" Wishing you many years of success and prosperity,

Believe me,

Yours very truly,

GEORGE HAMILTON."

" 17 Montagu Street,
Portman Square, W.1.
14th February, 1919.

" Dear Sir Charles.

" I was very glad to get your letter and I should be delighted to see you in a few days. Unfortunately just for the time being I am very busy, but, in the course of a few days, I will write to you again and fix up an appointment, as I should greatly enjoy a conversation with you.

" I am glad you read the report of the Mesopotamia Commission, because we only had indirect evidence upon which to report as regards yourself, but it was perfectly clear to us that you had been the mainstay of the Expeditionary Force from the time you landed, that the advance to Baghdad was made against your better judgment, and that you did all that was humanly possible against overwhelming odds, both in the retirement from Ctesiphon and in the subsequent protracted defence of Kut. . . .

Believe me,

Yours very truly,

GEORGE HAMILTON."

I bring this book to an end with two further letters which I value especially—the first from the gallant Aylmer, who tried so bravely to relieve me at Kut, and the second from the Colonel-in-Chief of my old regiment, the Royal Fusiliers.

"British Empire Hotel,
De Vere Gardens,
London, W.8.
8–11–18.

"My dear Townshend,

I believe that you have arrived back in the old country, after your long exile, so I write to welcome you and to send you my heartiest greetings.

"My thoughts have often been with you, and I have sympathised deeply in what must have been your feelings in not being able to take part in the war and follow up your splendid beginning. I congratulate you on having been able at the end to put in your effort to bring about the end of the war with Turkey. My own failure to relieve you all at Kut will always be to me the greatest source of regret, for I had so many friends there. I do not think that anything has cheered me up so much as the message I got from you and Melliss, when I was superseded.

Yours very sincerely,
E. G. AYLMER."

"Craigs,
Dumfries,
N.B.
18th November, 1918.

"Dear Townshend,

"On behalf of the Regiment I write to offer you our sincere congratulations on your return home after your long and very trying experiences; and also to express our admiration of your heroic services, and the hope that these may in due course be fully recognised.

"Trusting you are fit and well,

Believe me,
Yours sincerely,
GEOFFREY BARTON."

THE END

INDEX

PAGE

Abbadan Island - - - - 33
Abercrombie, Sir Ralph - - 57
Aboukir - - - - - - 57
Abu Rummànah - 109–110, 113
Abu Sidra - - - 51, 55, 70
Acre - - - - - - - 158
Afghans - - - - - - 84
Afridis - - - - - - 273
Agamemnon - - - - 382, 384
Ahwaz, 35, 38-9, 45, 47-8, 71, 74, 76, 102
Ajil - - - - - - - 152, 162
Al Bu Muhamad - - - - 51
Ali-al-Gharbi - 90, 92, 104-5, 107-8
Allenby, Lord - - 372, 375, 385
Alloa - - - - - - 54, 64
Amarah - 38, 41, 45, 50-2, 55, 66
,, Occupation of, 68-83, 100, 102-3, 105
Anatolian soldiers - - - - 177
Anderson, Major - - - - 48
Annesley, Col., A.S.R., 49, 56, 92, 98, 103, 152, 242, 262
Antipas, Mr. - - - - - - 41
Arabs, great turncoats 69, 199, *passim*
Armenians - - - - - - 384
Armistice between Allies and Turkey signed - - - 384-5
Armstrong, Sir George - - - 367
Ashar Creek - - - - - - 58
Askeri, Suleiman - - - 38-9
Aspern - - - - - - - 19
Ataba - - - - - - 113, 118
Austerlitz - - - - - 15, 95
Aylmer, General, 222-3, 229-30, 234-301, 318, 325, 393
Aziz Bey - - - - - - 70
Azizieh, 37, 123-5, 129, 132, 143, 145, 152, 189

PAGE

Bacon, Sir Francis - - - 199
Baghailah - - - - - - 126
Baghdad, 9-11, 72, 76, 86, 88, 91, 102, 130-1, 156, 168, 367-9, *passim*
Baghdadie - - - - - 155, 162
Bahran - 37-8, 43, 53-4, 61, 64-8
Bahrein Island - - - - - 33
Baluchis - - - - - - 41
Bannu frontier - - - - - 41
Baratoff, General, 258, 265, 279, 281, 287, 293, 312
Barjisiyah Wood - - - - 39
Barrett, General Sir Arthur 33-5, 37-9
Barton, Sir Geoffrey - - - 393
Basra, Occupation of, 33-59, 77, 84, 89, 102, 124, *passim*
Bastow, Capt., 40, 49, 68, 120, 190, 283
Bautzen - - - - - - 15, 95
Bazaine 27, 28, 30, 128, 211, 219
Beach, Col. - - - - - - 160
Beaconsfield, Lord - - - 383
Bedford, Capt. - - - - 386
Begg, Capt. R. H. - - - 49, 98
Belfort - - - - - - - 296
Belisarius - - - 40-1, 180, 361
" Bellums " - - 47, 57, *et seq.*
Benedek - - - - - - 17, 22
Benn, Lieut.-Col. - - - - 41
Beresford, Lord - - - 314, 337
Bernadotte - - - - - - 94
Birbeck Creek - - 51, 53-4, 64, 66
Black Watch - - - 252, 255
Blosse Lynch 51, 56, 67, 89, 150, 190
Blücher - - 10, 28, 29, 31, 337
Bonnal, General - - - - 30
Booth, Major - - - - - 226
Borodino - - - - - - 95
Bourbaki - - - - - - 296
Braikeh - - - - - - - 48

PAGE

Breslau - - - - - - 365
Brooke, Capt., killed - - - 63
Brooking, Brigadier-General 87, 210
Brown, Col. W. H. - 100, 229, 233
Buller, Sir Redvers - - - 309
Bushire - - - - - - 87
Bustan - - - - - 174, 182

Calthorpe, Sir Arthur - 381, 386
Cambrai, Battle of - - - - 25
Campbell - - - - - 217
Campbell, General Colin - 111-12
Cardew, Capt. H. S. - - - 49
Carnegy, Major G. P. O. - - 100
Caste, prejudices in Indian troops 122-3
Castlereagh, Lord - - - - 97
Cavalry, want of - - - - 123
Chahela Mounds - - - - 116
Chanzy, General - - - - 196
Charles, Archduke - - - - 19
Charles XII of Sweden - - 24, 102
Chefik Pacha - - - - - 362
Chitral - - - - - 260, 265
Chitty, Col. - 98, 152-3, 197, 217
Clausewitz - - 12, 13, 21, 24
Cleeve, Col. E. S. - - - - 100
Clemenceau - - - - - 385-8
Clery, Col. - - - - - 100
Climo, Col. 59, 64, 108, 111, 173, 176, 287
Clio - - - - - 51, 62, 68-9
Clyde, Lord (General Colin Campbell) - - - - 111-12
Codrington, Col. E. - - - 100
Comet, 69-72, 89, 108, 120, 131, 150, 191, 195, 197
Cookson, Lieut. - 50, 120, 133-4
Cornwallis at Yorktown - 219, 277
Cotter, Major H. J. - - - 46
Cotton, Major - - - - 268
Courtenay, Col. - - - 230, 232
Coventry, Lieut. - - - 193, 217
Cowley, Lieut. - - 92, 107, 335
Cox, Sir Percy, 91, 151, 155, 217, 227, 323
Crewe, Lord - - - - 242, 314
Ctesiphon, 10, 11, 25, 40, 88, 91, 102-3, 106, 121-3, 126, 130-2 143-184, 314, 320, *passim*
Culme-Seymour (*See* Seymour, Sir M. Culme-)
Curzon, Lord - - - - - 385

PAGE

Daghistani, Mahomed Pacha, 38, 71, 73
Dardanelles, 12, 22, 85, 125, 129, 159, 243, 299, 378, 380
Darley, Col. J. R. - - - - 100
Davie, Major J. H. M. - - 49, 98
Davison, Major-General - - 48
Davoust - - - - - 94, 337
De la Croix, General - - 389-390
Delamain, Brigadier-General, 33, 39, 42, 45, 47, 53, 90, 99, 105-7, 113-4, 117-122, 132-3, 135, 143, 148, 166, 171-3, 178, 181, 184, 188, 192-4, 213, 217, 288, 322, 366
Diala River - - - - 10, 159
Dirhamiyeh - - - - 41, 46-9
Djemal Pacha - - - - 107
Dobbie, Brigadier-General, 37, 42-5, 47, 50, 53, 58-9
Dogras - - - - - 46, 267
Dorset Regt., 47, 71, 92, 100, 115, 118, 122, 143, 174, 262, *passim*
Duff, Sir Beauchamp, 9-10, 86, 115, 127, 242
Dujailah - - - 289-290, 293
Dumra - - - - - - 87
Durrant, Rt. Rev. H. B., Bishop of Lahore - - - - - 114
Dwarka - - - - - - 40

Economy of Force, 14-15, 74, 85, 103, 114, 127, 166, *passim*
El Huir Creek - - 44, 50, 52, 54
El Kutunie - - 146-7, 160, 189
Enver Pacha, 12, 336, 360-1, 363-4, 366, 369
Espiègle - - - - - 51, 62-9
Essinn, 87-8, 90, 95, 102-3, 106, 109, 113, 116, 198, 211, 267, 285
Eugène, Prince - - - - 21
Evans, Col. V. W., 49, 57, 98, 147, 174, 212, 214, 217, 226, 249, 288
Eylau - - - - - - - 15
Ezra's Tomb - - 51, 56, 67-9, 73

Falkenhayn, General - - - 368
Fao - - - - - - 33, 41
Farmer, Major - - - - 155
Firefly, 150, 152, 155, 161, 191, 195, 197, 240

PAGE

Firman, Lieut. - - - - 335
FitzGerald, Col. - - - - 340
Foch, Marshal, 12, 17, 19, 20, 25, 27, 30, 386-390
Forbes, Major - - - - 98
Force, Economy of. (*See* Economy of Force.)
Fort St. George - - 49, 60, 72
Fort Snipe - - - 43, 62, 64
Forward - - - - - - 386
Franchet d'Espérey - - - 373
Franco-German War, 1870-1 13, 20, *passim*
Frazer, Col. G. S. - - - 100, 151
Frazer's Post - - 145, 151-2, 155
Frederick the Great, 15, 16, 24, 25
French, Viscount - - - - 293
Friedland - - - - - 15
Fry, General 37, 41, 47-8, 55, 91, 100, 116-7, 119-120, 131-2

Gallipoli Expedition. (*See* Dardanelles.)
Gamble, Col. R. N. - 49, 68, 98, 99
Garnett, Capt. - - - - 232
Genoa - - - - - - 219
George V, H.M. King - - 134, 278
Gilchrist, Major - - - - 98
Gneisenau - - - - - 31
Goeben - - - - - 365, 368
Goldfrapp - - - - - 217
Gorringe, General 39, 45, 48, 71-2, 77, 85, 87, 124, 198, 240, 256, 298, 304-5, 308-30, 338
Gravelotte - - - - 15, 93
Greenwood, Lieut. - - - 314
Grenfell, Lord - - - - - 339
Gribbon, Capt., killed - - 223, 239
Grier, Lieut.-Col. H. D., 46, 217, 230
Grouchy - - - - - - - 14
Gunfad - - - - - - 107
Gun Hill - - - - - 53-4
Gurkhas 102, 105, 173, 223, 320 *passim*
Gustavus Adolphus - - - 24

Haig, F.-M. Lord - - - - 24
Halfiyah - - - - 71, 73-6
Halim Bey - - - - 70-3
Hamilton, Brigadier-General 148, 153-4, 161, 165, 172-3, 175, 178, 181, 192-4, 213, 217, 281

PAGE

Hamilton, Lord George - - - 391
Hamilton, Sir Ian - - - - 299
Hamson, Mr. - - - - - 366
Hannah (*See* El Hannah).
Hannibal - - - 10, 24, 102
Hanotaux, Gabriel - - - 40
Hants Howitzer Battery, 51, 89, 108, 114
Hants Territorial Battalion - - 104
Hardinge, Lord - 78, 84, 134, 268
Hariana Lancers - - - - 100
Hawizeh - - - - - - 38
Hehir, Col. P., 49, 98, 99, 104, 107, 268, 310
Hewitt, Major - - - - 217
High Wall - - - - 181-3
Hindenburg - - - 25, 27, 28, 30
Hoghton, Brigadier-General 90, 99, 118, 121, 135, 143, 145, 148, 165, 172, 178, 181-2, 198, 213, 217, 228-9, 288, 310
Hohenlohe - - - - - 13
Huddleston, Lieut. G. C. R. - - 50
Hussars - - - - - 189-90

Indian Cavalry - - - 123, 190
Indian Expeditionary Force 'D' 33, 134, *passim*
Indian Lancers - - - - 105
Indian Regiments, 45, 143-4, 221, 225, 257, 273-4, 276, 283, 295, 299, 325-9, 331, *passim*
Indian self-mutilation - - - 236
Indian troops at trenches - - 122
Isàkh Bey - - 340, 359, 362-3
Islington, Lord - - - - 314
Izzet Pacha, 12, 364, 374, 376-80, 382

Jackson, Mr. - - - - - 362
Jala - - - - - - - 54
Jena - - - - - 15, 94
Joffre, Marshal - - - 24, 386
Johnson, Col. Blois - 53, 63, 100
Johnson, Lieut. - - - - 46
Jomini - - - 14, 15, 30, 31, 199
Joseph, King - - - - 21, 945
Julnar - - 91-2, 150, 334-
Jumeisa - - - - - - 162
Juno - - - - - - 87
Junot - - 250, 257, 296, 373
Justinian - - - - - 40, 361

PAGE
Karun River - - - 35, 38-9
Kataiban - - - - - 45
Keary, General - - - - 239
Kemball, General 46, 87, 90, 104, 176, 239, 242-4, 391
Khalil Bey - - - - 378, 380
Khalil Pacha, 10, 175, 255, 294, 297-8, 317, 334-6, 340-1, 366, 368
Khanikin - - - - - 88
Kila Saleh, 45, 51, 55, 56, 69, 70, 72-5, 102, 105
Kitchener, Lord - - - 337-9
Kléber - - - - - - 337
Königgrätz - - 15, 17, 22, 93
Koweit - - - - - - 41
Kurna, 35-67, 73; operation orders for the attack, 79-83, 151 *passim*
Kuropatkin - - - - - 16
Kut-al-Amara, 10, 11, 25, 36, 72, 74, 77; advance against Kut, 84-115; Battle of Kut, 116-142; retirement to, 185-208; defence of, 209-358; retaken, 367, *passim*

Ladysmith - - - - 309, 321
Lahore, Bishop of - - - - 114
Lajj - - - - - - - 185-9
Lake, Sir Percy, 256-7, 266, 273, 278, 281, 284, 287, 289, 297, 307, 311, 318, 338
Lancers - - - - - 89, 108
Langlois, General - - - - 30
Lawrence - - - - - - 51
Leachman, Major - 89, 109, 145, 152
Leipzig - - - - - - 14, 20
Lethbridge, Col. E. A. E. - - 100
Lewis Pelly, 47, 51, 60, 63, 65, 68, 70
Ligny - - - - - - - 15
Lines of operations and lines of communication - 128, *passim*
Liverpool, Lord - - - - 126
Lodge, Major F. C. - - - 100
Lübeck - - - - - - 337
Ludendorff - - - 25, 27, 30
Lützen - - - - - - 95
Lyautey, General - - - 389-390

Macdonald, Marshal - - - 29
MacGeorge, Col. H. K. - - - 100

PAGE
Mack - - 15, 94, 209, 211, 219
Mackenzie, Capt. - - - 91, 108
MacMahon - 27, 28, 94, 128, 196
Mahrattas, 11, 42, 47, 65, 100, 118, 151, 233, 267, *passim*
Mahsoudieh - - - - - 191
Maillard, General - - - - 30
Majar Kebir Canal - - 51, 56
Malamir - - - 56, 115, 155
Malinoff - - - - - 373, 376
Marengo - - - - 10, 11, 17
Marling - - - - - - 230
Marmarice - - - 43, 68-9, 71
Marmont - - - - - - 94
Marne - - - 20, 22, 24, 25
Marsh, Lieut. - - - - - 56
Mason, Col. H. O. B. Browne 49, 98
Mass, Principle of the - 15, *passim*
Massèna, 11, 15, 94, 219, 246, 296, 337
Mathews, Lieut. - - - 171, 223
Maude, General - - 10, 160, 376
Maule, Major H. N. St. J. - - 100
Mazera - - - - 37-8, 53, 60
Maziblah - 43, 52, 54-5, 61, 65-7
Mears, Major C. D. - - - 100
Mejidieh, 51, 56, 67, 92, 107, 114, 119, 150, 189, 197, 335
Melas - - - - - - - 337
Melliss, Major-General, Sir C. 38-9, 149, 165, 172-3, 175, 178, 181, 184, 191-3, 195, 197-8, 213, 217, 261, 288, 329, 366, 393
Mesopotamia Commission 77, 368 391
Mesopotamia Expeditionary Force - - - - 33, *passim*
Metemmeh - - - - - - 56
Metz - - - - 211, 219, 244
Miner - - - - - - 51
Mirage - - - - - - 113
Mohammerah - - - - - 38
Molesworth, Lieut.-Col. - - - 46
Moltke, 12, 13, 17, 19, 22, 24, 26, 27, 30, 32, 92, 94, 118, 129, 166
Mondego Bay - - - - 34, 97
Montagu, Mr. - - - - - 382
Moore, Sir John - - - - 199
Mordacq, General - - - - 386
Morland, Capt., 98, 171, 179, 212, 217, 340, 359, 365, 380
Mosul - - 68-9, 101, 114, 150
Mosul (city) - - - - - 360

PAGE
Mudros - - - - - - - 12
Müffling - - - - - - - 31
Mukden - - - - - - 15, 93
Munday, Capt. - - - - 381
Murdoch, Burn - - - - 146
Murray, Sir Archibald - - - 368
Murray, General Sir James W. 84, 340
Musandak - - - - - - 109
Muscat - - - - - - - 41
Musharrah Canal - - - 71, 74

Nakhailat - 63, 65, 110, 112, 116-7
Napier - - - - - - 146, 199
Napoleon, 10, 13, 14, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 23, 24, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 32, 47, 92-5, 128-9, 166-7, 387
Nasiriyeh, 36, 38-9, 51, 72, 76-7, 87-8, 102, 218
Navy, Strategy of British - - 22
Nazim, Pacha - - - - 371
Nevinson, Col. T. - - - - 100
New Orleans - - - - - 62
Newcombe, Col. - - - - 384
Nicholson, Lord - - - - 387
Nile Expedition - 104, 128-9, 146
Nixon, Sir John, 10, 11, 39, 41, 44-7, 49-51, 55-8, 68, 72-8, 85-7, 91, 97, 99, 103-4, 107, 114-7, 120, 123-4, 127-34, 145, 151-2, 155-6, 159-61, 171, 174, 183, 199-200, 228, 242, 273, 316-7, 325
Nogi - - - - - - - - 15
Norfolk Hill Redoubt 43, 53-4, 61, 63-5
Norfolk Regt. 41-2, 47-8, 51, 53, 67, 71-2, 92, 100, 115, 175, 181, 262, *passim*
Nunn, Captain 61, 62, 66, 69-71, 190, 193, 197
Nureddin Pacha 10, 73-4, 76, 86-8, 91, 95-6, 99, 103-6, 109-113, 125, 127, 131, 146, 156-8, 221, 240, 255

Odin - - 43, 51, 62, 63, 68-9
Old Basra - - - - - 48-9
Oman - - - - - - - 41
One Gun Hill - - - - - 64
One Tower Hill - 43, 53-4, 61, 63-5
One Tree Hill, 43, 50, 53-4, 61, 63, 65
Orah Ruins - - - - - 112
Osman Pacha 11, 210-11, 263, 336, 379
Oudinot - - - - - - - 29
Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry, 11, 48, 50, 63-6, 92, 100, 115, 233, 262, *passim*

*P.*1 - - - - - - - 51, 67
*P.*2 - - - - - - - - 67
*P.*3 - - - - - - - - 67
Pakenham at New Orleans - - 62
Parr, Col. H. O. 100, 266, 334, 340, 359
Pathans - - - 45, 274, *passim*
Pear Drop Bend - - - - 51
Peek, Sir Wilfrid - - - 283, 341
Peel, Capt. B. G. - - 49. 68, 98
Pelle, General - - - - 196
Pencker, General von - - - 31-2
Peninsular War - - - 33, 98
Persians - - - - - - - 84
Philip, Mr. - - - - 365-6
Pioneers 51, 53, 89, 91, 108, 116, 165, 190, *passim*
Plevna 11, 158, 210-11, 263, 321, 325, 336, 379
Poison gas - - - - - 286
Poona Division - 33, 42, *passim*
Port Arthur - - - - - 15
Preston, Major E. E. - - - 49
Principle of the Mass - 15, *passim*
Punjabis, 47-8, 53, 60-1, 63-6, 100, 105, 117, 155, 173, 175, 233, 273, 331, *passim*

Qararah - - - - - - - 158

Radcliffe, Major F. W. - - - 100
Rahmy Bey - - - - 379-80
Rajputs 42, 47, 100, 175, 266, 267 *passim*
Raouf Bey - - 376-80, 382-5
Ratisbon - - - - - 15, 95
Rawal Pindi Division - - - 39
Rechard Hikmat Bey - - - 382
Reid, Lieut. - - - - - 359
Reilly, Major 109, 110, 112, 119, 123, 132, 162, 170, 172
Repington, Col. - - - - 19

PAGE
Rimington, Brigadier-General, 197-8, 212
Roberts, Brigadier-General, 147, 149, 153, 184, 217
Roberts, Sir James - - - 77
Robinson, Brigadier-General - 38
Rosetta - - - - - - - 168
Rotah - - - 43, 51-2, 54, 66
Royal Field Artillery, 47, 53, 67, 89, 100, 107-9, 114, 194, *passim*
Royal Flying Corps - 66, *passim*
Royal Fusiliers - - - - 42
Royal Garrison Artillery 108, *passim*
Royal West Kent Regt. - - 189
Russel's Infantry - - - - 41
Russo-Japanese War - 15, 16, 17

Saad Ullah - - - - - - 382
Sabri Bey - - - - - 147
Saddle Back Hill - - - - 121
Sahil - - - - - 34, 45, 122
St. Cyr - - - - - - 337
St. John, Major R. S. - - - 100
Saisbannah - - - - - 157
Sakricha - - - - 37-8, 43
Salemi - - - - 56, 150, 161
Salman Pak (*See* Ctesiphon).
Sand Hills - - - - - 54
Sanders, Major G. A. F. - - 49
Sannaiyat - - - - 113, 121
Sappers and Miners, 45, 51, 53-4, 56, 67, 77, 89-91, 108, 143, 223, *passim*
Schlichting - - - - - 13
Searchlight Section - - - 108
Sedan - - - - - 20, 93-4
Seven Years' War - - - - 98
Seymour, Sir M. Culme 381-2, 386
Shadie - - - - - - 196-7
Shaiba, 38-9, 49, 72-3, 105, 111, 122, 151
Shaitan, 51, 60, 63, 68, 70, 71, 89, 108, 131, 150, 189
Shakespear, Col. L. W. - - - 49
Shatt-el-Arab - - - 33, 38, 60
Sheikh Saad, 90-2, 103, 105, 108, 191, 199
Shrapnel Hill - - - - - 54
Shumran Bend - - - 197-8
Shushan - - - - 50, 191, 224
Signal Company, 34th - - 51, 90
Sikhs - - - 46, 267, *passim*

PAGE
Simmons, Major - - - - 77
Sinbad the Sailor - - - - 42
Singleton, Lieut. - - - - 68
Sinn - - - - - - - 90
Sirmur Sappers and Miners 51, 53, 56
Slater, Lieut. - - - - - 90
Smith, Brigadier-General G. B., 46, 91, 100, 217, 230
Smith, Major H. B. - - - 100
Smithett, Col. - - - - 175
Spencer - - - - - - 97
Spooner - - - - - - 314
"Spot," General Townshend's fox-terrier - - - - - 341
Stapleton, Capt. F. H. - - 49, 98
Stewart, Sir Herbert - - - 146
Stoessel - - - - - - 15
Strategy, Fundamental Principles of - - - - 13-32, *passim*
Street fighting - - - 168-9
Subeh Bey - - - - 35-7
Subri Bey - - - - 260-1
Sumana, 68, 70, 89, 108, 150, 154, 161, 257, 271-2, 285, 304, 308-9, 312, 317-8, 323, 329-31
Suwada Marsh - - - - 113
Swan - - - - - - - 56
Sweet, Lieut. - - - - - 223
Sydenham - - - - - 242
Sykes, J. A. - - - - - 372

Talaat Pacha - - - - 364, 375
Tchataldtcha - - - 158, 374
Territorial System - - - - 20
Tewfik Bey 363-4, 375-7, 380, 382
Tigris - - - - - 51, *passim*
Tower Hill - - - 50, 53-4, 65
Townshend, Sir C. V. F., succeeds Sir Arthur Barrett, 39; appointed to Mesopotamia, 40; ill with fever, 77; "Townshend luck," 62; advance on Kurna, 45-67; Amarah, 68-83; advance on Kut, 84-142; Ctesiphon, 143-208; defence of Kut, 209-333; attempts at relief, 235-333; surrender of Kut, 334-41; prisoner at Constantinople, 359-79; arranges armistice with Turkey - - 374-85

PAGE

Trench, Capt. - - - - 193, 217
Triad - - - - - - 384
Tudway, Lieut. - - - 217, 287
Two Gun Hill - - 43, 61, 63-6

Ulm - - - 15, 94, 209, 211, 219
Umm-al-Tubul - - 97, 190-1
Utterson, Major - - - 155, 173

Verdun - - - - - 24, 229
Vittoria - - - - - - 94
Von der Goltz, Feld-Marschall 11, 167, 209-11, 216, 230-3, 235, 240, 246

Wagram - - - - 15, 19, 95
War, Fundamental Principles of, 13-32, *passim*
Waterloo - - - - - - 14
Wellesley's Rifles - - - - 100
Wellington, Duke of 23, 24, 28, 34, 94, 97, 126, 127, 210, 219, 225
Wemyss, Admiral 325, 328, 334-5, 381
White, Sir George - - - - 309
Whitmore, General Townsend's servant - - - - - 62
Whittal, Mr. - - - - - 381
Willcocks, Sir James - - - 293
Willisen, General von - - 27, 44
Wilson - - - - - 217, 226
Wilson, President - - - - 376
Wingfield-Smith - - - - 292
Winsloe, Major - 100, 101, 217
Wolfe at Quebec - - - 34, 43
Wolseley, Lord - - - - 104
Wood, Lieut. - - - - 193, 217

Yorktown - - - - 219, 277
Younghusband 218-20, 237, 239, 244

Zeur - 135, 145, 156-7, 161-3
Zubair - - - - - 48-9

Date Due

OCT 19 1973

CAT. NO. 23 233 PRINTED IN U.S.A.

D 568.5 .T7
Townshend, Charles Vere F
My campaign in Mesopotamia.
010101 000
0 1163 0213459 2
TRENT UNIVERSITY

D568.5 .T7
Townshend, Sir Charles Vere F.
My campaign in Mesopotamia.

DATE	ISSUED TO
	142087

Townshend, Sir Charles V. F.

142087

W. N. HIBBEN & CO., LTD.
VICTO[illegible], B. C.